

# SLUMS OF NEW YORK

By  
HARRY MANUEL SHULMAN

"SLUMS OF NEW YORK presents matter which must be considered seriously by those interested in the welfare of our City, particularly as it relates to our youth.

"The purpose of this book, which is to excite the interest of intelligent and informed groups in the problem, is highly commendable. To this purpose the information set forth in the book is important and valuable and its call to awakened consciousness of conditions cannot go unheeded by any whose pride in their City does not close their eyes to the drab and ugly spots."

HENRY C. TURNER,  
*Former President Board of Education,  
City of New York.*

# SLUMS *of* NEW YORK

**T**HIS extensive volume is a study of cultural patterns in New York's racial slum colonies. It treats of transplanted populations, Sicilians, North Italians, European Jews, Czechs, Negroes, and of their children.

Conducted as a long-time study of slum life during prosperity, 1925-6, and during depression, 1931-2, it seeks a solution for slum eradication in terms of re-education rather than of physical rehabilitation, as through housing. It critically evaluates the impact upon slum life of existing social institutions, such as the churches, schools and social service agencies and singles out the public school as the only social institution possessing the vitality and the resources to overcome the vicious interplay of pathological social forces in the slum. It reveals prosperity and depression as affecting in no significant way the lives of the submerged class.

Family life, the social world of the male child, and the social pattern of the immigrant neighborhood, are carefully treated, in four major sections representing studies of four different racial communities at six year intervals. Population trends, housing, home life, employment, health, community ties, play and recreation, family adjustment and maladjustment and crime and delinquency are among the subjects covered. The social patterns of the slum are described in terms of mobility, cultural conflict and competition of social institutions.

The generalizations are based upon intensive quantitative studies, involving two years of field study and several years spent in interpretation of the data, which consist of case studies of 750 families and 1500 male children. The book is rich in illustrations and case studies drawn from the lives of individuals and families.

The author is widely known for his studies in the field of juvenile delinquency and criminology, and was director of social studies for the New York State Crime Commission, 1926-31. He is Lecturer in child guidance and juvenile delinquency in the School of Education and the Division of Sociology of the College of the City of New York.

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SLUMS OF NEW YORK



# SLUMS OF NEW YORK

BY  
HARRY MANUEL SHULMAN



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1938

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One month in the slums  
And I am sad,  
So sad  
I seem devil possessed,  
Or mad.

Sweet heaven sends  
No miracle  
To ease  
This hell;  
The careless earth  
Rings no  
Alarum bell.

Is there no way  
That help can come?

From *Songs from the Slums* by Toyohiko  
Kagawa. Copyright 1935. Used by per-  
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## INTRODUCTION

### ROTARY CLUB OF NEW YORK STUDIES ITS COMMUNITY

#### A VENTURE IN SOCIAL ORIENTATION

**S**ERVICE to the community is inherent in the objectives of Rotary. That the exploitation of this objective is commonly undertaken along the most obvious lines is natural; certain social inequities so patently offer themselves for correction that their relative superficiality, and the fact that further attack on these problems is but a duplication of effort already effective through other agencies, may easily be overlooked. The Rotary Club of New York has engaged in a number of ventures, devoting much effort and contributing large amounts of money to them. The results have been notable and gratifying. But at the same time there has existed the feeling that there were still bigger and more important tasks to which business and professional men could well address themselves. Sensing this most keenly, Rotarian Raymond J. Knoepfel suggested to the Boys Work Committee of the Rotary Club of New York that it make a study of boys—their conditions and opportunities on Manhattan Island in New York City. The Boys Work Committee undertook to make the survey. A Sub-Committee on Survey gave careful consideration to the form and scope of the study, entered upon the work, carefully studying the material as it was developed and gave direction to the project, subject to the general approval of the Boys Work Committee. Miss Delphine Dunker made the original study and to her is due the credit of gathering the data upon which Mr. Shulman based the second survey and wrote the report. The opportunity for comparison of conditions at the beginning and the end of a five-year period has made it possible to draw valid, often striking conclusions. The present volume is the result.

This began in 1926. The facts were to be gathered, conclusions reached, and a blueprint drawn for the future social welfare activities of the Club, all within a brief space of time. Twelve years have passed. The members have learned that the collection, recording and interpretation of social data are more difficult than the determination of business costs, say, or the planning of a sales campaign. Such study is even more difficult than scientific research. And yet in the long run it is the more important, for it deals with the ultimate in human values.

Almost insuperable difficulties were encountered. The gathering of accurate data from the foreign born in a slum area is in itself a task only for an organization with unlimited personnel and financial resources. The adequate compiling and recording of the facts requires a combination of scientist, statistician, and journalist, the interpretation requires both a sociologist and statesman. The importance and difficulty of the entire process must be re-explained to the skeptical, all of which is good for them and for the study. They are busy persons who have had, especially during the depression years, to be mightily concerned with their own business affairs. And yet it is just when one's own personal business seems to be disintegrating that it is well to look into the community which has failed to support it. This the Rotary Club of New York has done.

The major conclusion of the author is startling in both its simplicity and complexity. He indicates that the problems of recreation, of physical welfare, of social rehabilitation, are too great, too varied, too widespread, to be solved by disparate, uncoordinated efforts, no matter how well intentioned and well-conceived they may be individually. He points to the school as the one public agency with which all children come into contact and which should therefore be charged with the task of social adjustment. This is simplicity itself. However, he also states forcefully that by and large the schools have not met this larger obligation and are not as yet equipped to do so. There are, of course, notable exceptions. But, in general, the elementary and secondary schools provide to only a deplorably meager extent for the development of those aspects of life that are not academic. Health, recreation, vocation during the full waking hours of the



child bulk much larger in the experiences of any individual than does his knowledge of academic subjects.

The task of adapting the schools to this newer conception of social service is enormous in magnitude and complexity. In many communities the attempt is being made, as it is in New York City, but the difficulties are staggering. Apart from the professional problems of training and retraining teachers for new skills and attitudes, there are the matters of ground space, building, equipment, cooperation with existing agencies, development of public opinions, and everything that has to do with public expenditures. It is here the members of Rotary may perform a notable service. If they are stirred by the importance of social adjustment, then they will bring all their influence to bear upon their local governments, upon boards of education, upon individual schools, in order that these institutions may, through the force of public opinion, be brought to a fuller realization of the fact that their own employees are products of a favorable or an unfavorable environment and that the supply of efficient employees depends in part upon what the community does to make that environment favorable. Still further, that as long as society produces unemployables, employers will have to support them through public relief. If they can be made employable they will contribute to the common good instead of just drawing upon it. Finally, studies such as these, made under the auspices of socially minded business and professional men, are bound to make those men more conscious and more understanding of the total social problem and therefore able to make a real contribution to the group thinking that is the essence of democracy.

SURVEY COMMITTEE,

FRANKLIN J. KELLER, *Chairman*,

LEON C. FAULKNER,

LEWIS A. HIRD,

RAYMOND J. KNOEPEL.

*New York, April, 1938.*



## PREFACE

**T**HIS BOOK is a study of family and neighborhood life in four slum areas of immigrant settlement in Manhattan Boro, of New York City, during a year of prosperity, 1926, and two years of depression, 1931-2. It deals with over 500 families studied through the case method, and counting duplications due to continued residence during both survey years, consists of the analysis of 779 family case records, comprising the histories of 4,243 individuals, including 1,536 boys between 2 and 21 years of age. It is thus equivalent in extent to a case study of a sizeable industrial town. The analysis of the data has taken a long period of time. The significance of those data has been increased by that extensive analysis, and their meaning is clearer as seen from the perspective of 1937.

The author has tried to describe and analyze the slum, not merely as a mass of physically deteriorated housing, but as a cultural pattern, consisting of a way of living and thinking. Whatever significance this study may have, lies not particularly in the novelty of the subject matter covered, but in the attempt to produce a full-length picture of a mode of life which is ordinarily seen only in dramatized snatches, in the films, the press, and in novels.

The study attempts to answer such questions as the following:

Is the slum always a colony of Old-world residence persisting over two generations or is it sometimes an area of transitory residence of different immigrant populations in cultural conflict? How do these diverging forms of slum influence family and neighborhood life?

Is the deteriorated slum a dreary waste of disorganized families, or are there important differences in ability and initiative among them? Are slum homes all dirty, slovenly and lacking in æsthetic standards?

What are the standards of family life, compared to those as we know them among more fortunately situated families? To what extent is deteriorated slum housing attributable to owners and to what extent to tenants? What are the physical aspects of slum dwelling, how many persons live in one room, two rooms, three rooms? How frequently is the backyard out-house still in use, where do they bathe, how much of a luxury is a private toilet? What has the new mechanical age done for the slums—what of radios, telephones?

Is there such a thing as a family meal? How many of the mothers are required to work, outside of their household duties, to maintain a minimal subsistence level? What rents do they pay?

What is the range of activities and interests of parents? How many of them read and speak English? How many are still illiterate? What do they read? What social organizations represent the boundaries of their extension into the community? Who visits them on their home block? Where do they shop? Is there any difference in interests between parents and children? Is there cultural conflict between the two generations? How is it expressed? How much of family life remains a group activity and to what extent does the family constitute a social unit? In what ways has the slum family lost the power of transmitting racial culture? How has that demoralized its stabilizing control over the younger generation?

How do the children of the slum live? How do they get along in school? What is their attitude, and that of their parents, toward education? How adapted to their abilities is the existing academic curriculum of public elementary education? Have these children special non-verbal abilities, artistic or musical interests? Have they received vocational education and vocational guidance in the public schools?

To what extent has training preceded employment? To what extent do children work at the same type of jobs as their parents? How much of boy's work is in "blind alley" jobs? How do they obtain their jobs?

Where do slum boys play? What leadership is offered by supervised recreation? To what extent does supervised recrea-

tion extend its leadership into the slum block? How adequate is the extent of supervised play compared to the need? What is the "pulling power" of social centers, such as settlements, and supervised play spaces, such as playgrounds? What increase in play space would be necessary to provide every slum child with supervised recreation?

What was the health of parents and of children? To what extent did preventive medicine aid these families? What is the attitude of mothers to birth control? To what extent did the schools undertake the correction of physical defects and malnutrition among boys?

What did parental supervision over boys consist of? How much did it extend beyond gross control over hours of homecoming? To what extent was psychological guidance substituted for physical punishment and threats?

How much adult and juvenile delinquency was discovered? How did the amount compare with that officially known to police and courts? Was there a significant relationship between the extent of adult crime and juvenile delinquency?

What did these families think and feel about their mode of life? Were they satisfied or dis-satisfied? Did they wish to move? Did they recognize any physical needs of improvement in their community? Did they have an economic philosophy?

How did the economic depression begin to affect their lives? What did it mean to them as a social phenomenon? What did it do to their incomes, their standard of living, their mental and marital stability? How extensively had prosperity seeped down into sub-marginal economic groups such as these? What did the depression do to work opportunities among parents? Among boys? What use did boys make during periods of unemployment, of available educational and vocational training opportunities? What did the depression do to children's play? How did it affect membership in supervised recreation, in independent clubs, patronage of commercialized recreations?

What social institutions were a strong educative force among these families? What public and private social services conducted forceful guidance programs for the improvement of the

health, sanitation, education, vocational training and leisure-time activities of these families? In what direction can we look for such leadership in the cultural rehabilitation of the slum? Can slum clearance be effective unaccompanied by cultural rehabilitation of slum families?

The author has had the unstinted and freely given assistance of many public departments, private social agencies and individuals in the compilation of source materials for this volume. To these the author extends his deep appreciation. To Delphine Dunker, survey director of the original study, during prosperity, he owes a debt of gratitude for having analyzed the materials of that earlier study. To Edward Burstein, for his assistance in the preparation of the manuscript, the author expresses his appreciation. To the author's wife, Daga Naomi Stalstjerna, goes his deepest appreciation for her assistance in field studies, organization of statistical materials, and for her understanding patience.

H. M. S.

## CHAPTER ONE

### CULTURE PATTERNS IN FOUR SLUM AREAS

FOR FIFTY YEARS new arrivals have poured into the port of New York City, drawn from the ends of the earth—from every country in Northern, Southern, and Southeastern Europe, and from our own Southern states and island possessions. A large part of this continuous stream of migration halted close to the point of entry and established huge racial colonies. Thus, the growth of New York City has been largely the growth of these racial neighborhoods and the social problems of the urban community lie to a very large extent in the existence of these racial neighborhoods.

These areas of first immigrant settlement are culture areas. They carry the traditions of the Old World culture and form a protective barrier of the familiar Old World usages against the unfamiliar folkways of the surrounding American community. The fusion of these racial cultures into one homogeneous community culture is still in process. This process is taking place largely among the first generation American-born children of these immigrant groups. The process of cultural transition has been accompanied by social conflict, and has created social patterns different from both the Old World patterns and the native American patterns. The study of these contemporary transitional social patterns and their effect on neighborhood and family life form the subject of this volume.

The different blocks in this study depict different cultural groupings. Tyler Street was a homogeneous South Italian racial colony of long permanence, consisting of closely-knit family, kinship, and fellow-immigrant groups. Fleet Street represented a less homogeneous racial colony of North Italians, impinged upon by an alien Chinese community. Parnell Street represented a cross-section of several East European and Asia

Minor nationalities, drawn together through an economic tie, the cleaning and maintenance of Lower Manhattan office buildings, which furnished employment to nearly all. Palm Street represented an area in transition from one racial culture to another. Its population was a rapidly shifting, mobile one. In the transition, Jews were replaced by Negroes and Spanish-Americans, the process being accompanied by cultural conflict, loss of community unity, and damage to community institutions.

In certain ways, all were similar populations. They were all lacking in social status. They were "inferior" social groups, inferior in opportunity for social, educational, and economic advancement. They were the toilers, few among them being of the petty merchant class, and of the intelligentsia. The sole exception to this picture was the 1926 population of Palm Street, which included a racial colony of successful, well-adapted middle-class Americanized Jews, of remote immigrant status.

All four neighborhood groups lived under somewhat similar circumstances. Their homes were congested urban areas, of which three were slums and only one was a formerly middle-class area, which was deteriorating into a slum. None had had the experience of personal home ownership but, for the most part, they had a sense of permanence and attachment to the area of dwelling. Save for Palm Street, which was in population transition during the survey period, a surprisingly large portion of the population was deeply rooted in its habitat, having lived in the neighborhood, the block, and even the same apartment, for years and tens of years.

The community life of most families was narrowly encompassed. The church was a strong and compelling institution, particularly among the mothers. Affiliations with social institutions and organizations outside of the nationality circle were few and timid. Few of the residents belonged to labor unions; hardly a single one had been radicalized. There was surprising complacency of attitude toward the squalid urban setting. Ideationally, most of the residents were mentally impoverished. Abstract ideas were expressed with difficulty and interests were at a concrete level. For the most part, these people were pre-



occupied with the elemental tasks of obtaining food, shelter, and a modicum of pleasure, and of harrying their restive offspring into some degree of obedience.

By and large, these families were hardly aware of the broad economic and social world outside their door. The depression of 1929-31 was an individual experience to each of them. They individually became more and more acutely aware of the lessened pay-check, the less frequent employment for their women, the increased precariousness of employment tenure. By 1931, those who had escaped the worst of the early phases of the depression hugged themselves in their good fortune; the less fortunate cursed their fate.

Over all was the tinge of anxiety, of the dangers of a less fortunate morrow. Above all, there was struggle. Each individual family struggled desperately to keep above the level of dependence upon charity.

### The Slum Cycle

Each of the blocks in this study represented a different phase in that process of social disorganization ordinarily known as the slum cycle.<sup>1</sup> Palm Street represented an early stage in the slum transition cycle, Parnell and Fleet Streets represented late stages, and Tyler Street represented a terminal stage in transition from slum to middle-class residential housing area.

Palm Street, in Harlem, was an example of a block in nationality transition, characterized by cultural conflict, great population mobility, and marked social distance. The houses consisted of "New Law"<sup>2</sup> apartments occupied in 1926 by comfortable middle-class families, who were replaced by more recent immigrants of inferior social and economic status, during the years 1926 to 1931. During the survey period there was only a 12% reduction in population, but tremendous mobility, only 5½% of the families living in the block in 1926 having remained until 1931. This mobility represented an almost com-

<sup>1</sup> See "Delinquency Areas," Clifford Shaw, et al.—(University of Chicago Press, 1929) p. 11-21.

<sup>2</sup> Erected in accordance with the Tenement House Law of 1901.

plete nationality change. In 1926 the block was almost solidly Jewish; in 1931 it was almost entirely Porto Rican and Negro. With the change in population, came physical deterioration in housing, and the first steps in transition from residential area to slum.

Accompanying the physical deterioration, the transition brought in families of less stable social organization. Broken homes, caused in part by the immigration of working adults prior to mothers and children, resulted in only 57% of the families having both the father and the mother present in the home in 1931. The boarder, or lodger, became a common, and perhaps complicating factor in family disorganization.

A second block, Fleet Street, in lower Manhattan, was a boundary between two markedly different culture areas, Chinese and Neapolitan Italian, with interpenetration into Fleet Street of both racial groups on a peaceful basis maintained for several decades through the preservation of great social distance. The survey, conducted among the Italian families, revealed the block as being a slum, of fairly stable, long-continued culture patterns among families of remote immigrant status. Mobility was low, 64% of the residents having occupied their quarters continuously from 1926 to 1931, and a large group had maintained residence long prior to 1926. The majority of the homes were unbroken.

Parnell Street, on the lower West Side of Manhattan, was a block well along in slum transition and represented a curious mixture of residuals of populations that had, during successive flows of immigration, been flung upon our shores. Irish, Syrians, Greeks, and Czechoslovakians, in the order of their migration, lived together on this block, a stone's throw from the Atlantic Ocean, in peaceful tolerance of cultural differences and even with a certain amount of social contact established between them.

This block represented a peculiar symbiotic relationship to the towering office buildings which flanked it on either side, depending on its low-roofed houses for their own guaranty of sunlight and ventilation. Parnell Street residents depended for their livelihood upon positions as porters and charwomen in

these buildings. The population was stable and slightly increasing, with low mobility, 62% of the families having been included in the 1926 survey. The perpetuation of this markedly deteriorated slum is dependent upon its continued status as a "taxpayer" while continuing as a guaranty of light and ventilation to the owners of the surrounding skyscrapers, who were said to own title to most of the block.

Tyler Street, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the fourth block in the study, was farthest along in transition, part of the block having been demolished, and rebuilt as part of a middle-class garden community apartment housing project.

This block consisted of a homogeneous Sicilian-Italian racial colony of long duration. There was very low mobility, 40% of the residents having been on the block for twenty years or more and 82% having been included in the 1926 sampling. Characteristic of the slum, toward the end of its cycle there was a sharp reduction in population—25% since 1926—accompanied by great numbers of apartment vacancies.

This block, perhaps more than the others, had the characteristics of the classical slum. The majority of the parents were of foreign birth; the majority of children were of native birth. Culturally, the block had resisted Americanization. Despite the long period of residence of most of the parents, there was still 40% of illiteracy.

### Population Trends

The slum block is said to be normally one of diminishing population. Two of the blocks were typical, from this point of view. Tyler Street, on the Lower East Side, diminished 25% and Palm Street in Harlem diminished 12% in population between the two survey years. However, Parnell Street, a Lower West Side oasis in the skyscraper area, maintained a stable and even slightly increasing population. The population changes for Fleet Street could not be obtained with accuracy because of the difficulty in ascertaining the changes in the Chinese population.

Although the movement of population was away from 3 out

of 4 of these blocks, yet there was an astonishing permanency of residence in all save Palm Street. Whereas in Palm Street only 5½% of these families included in the 1930 survey had been resident in 1926, 82% in Tyler Street, 64% in Fleet Street, and 62% in Parnell Street remained as block residents between 1926 and 1931. In Tyler Street, 40% of the residents had dwelt on the block for twenty years or more. In Tyler, Fleet and Parnell Streets the nationality composition varied but slightly for both survey years. Palm Street, however, had an almost complete nationality change. Thus, while one block, Palm Street, was an example of cultural change due to population change, the other three were, by virtue of their permanency of residence, examples of cultural change due to other social factors.

The study of child life in three of the blocks was profoundly affected by this lack of mobility in that, in the earlier years, the study dealt predominantly with pre-adolescents whereas, in the second survey year, it dealt to a large extent with an adolescent group.

Throughout both survey years in all save Palm Street, the majority of parents were of foreign birth and the majority of children were of native birth. In that block, the incoming population included children born outside of the continental United States.

### Housing

The housing in these blocks represented successive stages in American domicile construction. On Parnell Street and in part of Fleet Street were to be found the small 6-12 family houses characteristic of early nineteenth century New York. In part on Fleet Street and throughout Tyler Street were found the newer type of "old law" tenements having as high as forty families, erected during the period of vast immigration influx prior to 1901. On Palm Street, in Harlem, there were "new law" apartment houses, erected since 1901.

Conveniences ranged from the modern steam-heated, electrically lighted Palm Street apartment, with its own bath and toilet fixtures, at one extreme, to antiquated, cold-water flats, gas-lit, heated by coal ranges, without bathtubs, and having

either shared hall toilets or individual yard toilets at the other. The average family occupied four rooms in an "old law" tenement house, and had electric light, stove heat, and a hall toilet.

The majority of houses, in all blocks save Palm Street, were in a poor state of repair, deteriorated, dirty, and without proper light and air. In all blocks save Palm Street, the extremely hazardous vertical or inclined ladder fire escape was in use.

Between the two survey years there appeared to have been an increase in elementary home comforts. There was an increased number of homes with hot water and private bathrooms. While these installations probably represented an attempt on the part of landlords to make the apartments more attractive in order to retain or gain tenants, it cannot be denied that these improvements would not have taken place unless there had been a generally increased demand among the residents for better physical conditions. There were evidences that the slum was becoming "bathroom conscious."

### Culture Patterns in the Home

Home life, in the majority of these slum blocks, if it were to have been measured in traditional terms, namely, the proportion of broken homes, would have seemed to have been very stable indeed; for the percentages of unbroken homes, in which both father and mother were present, were very high, ranging from 75% to 94%, with the exception of Palm Street in 1931, which had only 57% of unbroken homes.

However, it becomes increasingly clearer from a perusal of the case materials in this study that a formal designation of a family as broken or unbroken in terms of the presence or absence of one or both of the breadwinners is but a superficial measure of family stability. For, despite the fact that the majority of these families were physically intact, the case records show that they were not effective instruments of either cultural transmission or habit-training.

The parental generation had relatively little influence or control over the lives of the younger generation. The home appears to have been, in most instances, primarily a physical habitat

wherein cultural transmission took place unconsciously more frequently than consciously; that is, the children absorbed the influences presented in that background without any planned rearing being evident. The average parent was concerned with the carrying on of a physical routine; to be sure that the children got to school, got their meals, and came home on time for sleep.

The creation of an activities program or even the provision of guidance of cultural interests, occurred in only a minority of the cases. There was almost an utter lack of play relation between parents and children, and a concomitant almost total lack of cultural influences in the home. Pictures, books, magazines and toys, were almost entirely absent. Musical instruments, however, were relatively common, particularly among the Italian families. Radios, a new significant cultural source, were present in a surprisingly large number of homes.

The homes were usually physically clean, but barren and overcrowded. There was no privacy, no consequent possibility for any individual to have scope for his own activities and interests, and no possibility of a systematic and organized family life. Children were forced to the streets for amusement, for lack of play space in the home. The employment of mothers and fathers at irregular hours usually prevented even the family meal from being a joint affair.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the break in family life was the inability of the parental generation to affect the interests and attitudes of the younger generation. There was very little joint thinking between parents and children. The cause is probably to be found in the sharp diversity of day to day cultural experiences of parents and children.

There were a great many indications that the parent generation lived within a secluded, sheltered culture and was very uninformed with reference to life outside of the home block. Very few persons who could bring new experience entered the home block. There were practically no telephones to tie the home block to distant parts of the city and to other people who could bring in new experience. Most of the purchasing was done in the immediate neighborhood and a great deal of it, on the Lower East Side, was carried on in the street, at push-carts.

There were language barriers preventing access to the world outside. From one-half to one-sixth of the parents were reported variously, on different blocks, as speaking only their native tongue. The mothers were generally the poorer linguists. A large proportion of the parents had not acquired the ability to read, percentages of illiteracy ranging from 19% to 40.5%. Among those who could read, ability to read only a foreign newspaper accounted for approximately 40% to 50% of the cases. The mothers were inferior to the fathers generally in the acquisition of English as a reading language, and were also more frequently illiterate.

Parents who lived under these circumstances inevitably found an ever-growing gulf between themselves and their growing American children who were undergoing new experiences daily in the street, in school, in recreation centers, and in employment.

### Education

For the majority of children studied, the elementary school spelled the beginning and the end of their formal education and, in the absence of an adult education program, the elementary school bore the weight of preparation for parenthood and citizenship.

This survey did not make a study of the school syllabus and can evaluate the success of the elementary school only indirectly through observations drawn from contact with the children themselves. These observations indicated that the elementary school in its relation to these children had been markedly ineffective in dealing with their educational and social needs. The ineffectiveness of the existing curriculum and methods of education was seen in the lack of any strong interest in, or desire for, education among most of these children, save the Jewish children on Palm Street in 1926.

This lack of interest was related to school failure, formally, as represented by repetition of school grades, and informally, as represented by inadequate grasp of school subject materials. The tremendous amount of retardation, particularly in the upper grades, pointed to obvious defects in the school curriculum.

There was evidence that the continued stress on book subjects and the continued inadequacy of manual subjects and project types of activity were responsible for a great deal of this retardation.

The incapacity of these children along linguistic, verbal lines was indicated in many ways. When interviewed, they were found to be inarticulate, meager in their concepts, and poverty-stricken in their general language development. A great deal of this inadequacy may be attributed to their bi-lingual background, but much must be attributed to inferior intelligence and to a general lack of capacities for symbolic thinking. The lack of any but the most rudimentary reading materials in the home further illustrated this deficiency. On the other hand, a large proportion of these children appeared to have ambitions along mechanical lines. All of these findings indicated an insistent need for a realignment of the elementary public school to fit vast masses of children similar to those dealt with in this study.

Aside from its inadequacies in the provision of skills, the elementary public school appeared to be no integrative force in the lives of these children, either in relation to their own futures or to their community group living. The school provided neither vocational direction nor community organization. The children in this study appeared to have drifted through their entire school life without having been the recipients of guidance with regard to their vocational future. There were no provisions for vocational guidance and no attempts at evaluation of attitudes, save for the conventional grouping of children into groups of varying intelligence, a device which was intended to expedite teaching rather than learning.

The schools were woefully weak in their machinery for the study of personality and character. Very little information could be obtained from schools along these lines, except in interviews with a single visiting teacher. Seen in their relation to the ideal of being a center for social service, the elementary schools appeared to have almost entirely neglected the social service aspect of their relation to their pupils and to the community.

The schools were ineffective in dealing with health problems. Physical examinations were inadequate and sketchy and even



such incomplete examinations indicated the continuation of obvious defects which were reported year in and year out.

There was a broad gap between the school and the neighborhood. Part of this may have been due to the cultural gulf between the non-resident teaching staff and the immigrant parents of these children. This gulf was measured by the lack of reference in the home on the part of children or parents, to any activity carried on in the school, to anything taught in the school, or to any person connected with the school. Attitudes taught in the school did not appear to have been consciously accepted or to have effectively entered the home life.

The school appeared to have no important part in the formation of community thinking, in the setting of community standards, in the sharpening of community goals, or in the development of community leadership.<sup>3</sup> Neither prosperity nor depression appeared to have particularly affected the school situation, except that during depression there was a sharp diminution in the number of children benefiting from higher education and a reduction in the number of boys having higher education as an ambition.

Despite the indication of disinterest in school, there appeared to be a surprising amount of submission to the school machine. There was a surprisingly good attendance record, even among those attending continuation schools. Compulsory education had apparently been accepted on a habitual basis.

### Employment

There was marked variability in the different block groups among both adults and youths, with regard to occupations. Among the Sicilian Italians, the trend was toward the skilled and semi-skilled trades; among the Jewish group, it was toward commercial occupations; but among the other populations, the

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<sup>3</sup> There is intended here no criticism of individual teachers or school administrators. It is obvious that the criticism must be directed not against individuals but against the philosophy which assigns to the schools its present limited community role.

trend was definitely in the direction of blind-alley jobs in unskilled lines.

The employment of the boys tended to be more variable in type than that of the parents. The great majority of parents were unskilled laborers; only few were petty merchants and skilled artisans. The boys, however, tended toward a higher occupational level in terms of opportunity, although many shined shoes, peddled newspapers and ran errands. Where ambitions were expressed, they usually represented a trend away from manual labor status. In general, however, the selection of occupation by boys appeared to have been accomplished in a haphazard way. There appeared to have been practically no genuine vocational training and no vocational guidance. The one contribution to vocational training appeared to be that of the continuation school which, in a number of instances, particularly in the electrical trade, led to occupation in the trade that was taught.

With few exceptions, boys during both survey years began working as soon as they were legally permitted to do so, the choice of employment being determined chiefly by the extent of the immediate earnings. The average boy delayed consideration of his vocational future until just before leaving or soon after having left elementary school.

Practically none of them sought their jobs through the newspapers or through employment offices, but usually through the family, through friends, and through direct solicitation. It is a moot point whether this limitation was dictated by ignorance or whether it was in fact due to their being poor material for placement through the more selective types of agency. The fact remains that, instead of entering the general job market and competing with a great many others, they used, wherever possible, the influence that friendship and the family circle could bring to bear upon prospective employers. Work was in this way tied up with the closely integrated community life of their families.

The period of adolescence was in no respect a period of vocational training for these boys. The spectre of unemployment did not serve as an incentive to them to secure subsequent voca-

tional training, either at day school or at night school. And, even while unemployed for long periods, practically none of them undertook to secure further vocational training. This was particularly noticeable during the depression year 1931-2, when great numbers of unemployed boys spent their time in desultory search of employment, sometimes sleeping late and, in other cases, seeking desperately for work. None, however, were willing to go to vocational schools during this period, some expressing the opinion that they were unfit for further schooling and others complaining that while they were unemployed they did not feel like studying. There is no doubt that the tension resulting from unemployment militated against their taking an educational attitude toward their vocational needs.

During the depression, there was not only considerable unemployment but a marked reduction in the salaries of those who remained employed, and the practical elimination of part-time work for younger boys. The depression saw a decrease in the number engaged in street sale of newspapers but it led to a large increase in the number engaged as itinerant bootblacks.

Among children below full-time employment age, there was a great deal of useful labor, nevertheless. In the pre-depression years, many assisted their mothers in the home garment industry. Others engaged in street trades as newspaper vendors and bootblacks; still others ran errands, and many were occupied in their fathers' stores or at their push-carts. Those who could not be directly employed spent a great deal of their time at domestic tasks such as keeping the family woodbin supplied with scrap wood obtained from neighborhood warehouses.

The general impression given by this group was that children blundered their way through an unsuccessful school experience into haphazard careers as employed workers. There appeared to be no planning or pattern arising from adequate social control or social guidance.

### Leisure Time

The major portion of the play life of these children escaped adult supervision. The child's social world was only slightly affected by contact with recreation centers, playgrounds, boys'

clubs, etc., and those who participated in these supervised recreations did so only over a very limited time span. Since the majority of these children did not attend high school, the extra-curricular program of the secondary schools reached only a small number of them. In many instances, however, the school recreation program was the only supervised play contact of the child. For most of these children the normal habitat was the street and the normal activities were street play, street trades, street adventures, and street delinquencies.

This study makes no pretense of analyzing the subjective nature of these children's play lives. The majority were shy and inarticulate under the rather formal circumstances surrounding this inquiry. Overtly, at least, there appeared to be in their play life very little of the refining, sophisticated influence of adult direction, either that of parents or recreation workers. Their play activities were crude and simple in their type of organization and consisted all too frequently of rather aimless loitering and mischief. There was little or no indication that in their play life any of their creative abilities were tapped, but there was much to indicate that their play life was a period during which the struggle for existence of their parents was mirrored in play.

A very large proportion of these children snatched time for play from work activities. Their play hours were subordinated to family duties, such as in running errands, gathering wood, minding younger children, working for their parents, or in working for other employers, or as independent street traders. Only the children below the age of twelve were left relatively free to their own play devices.

Play, as carried on in the street, was hampered by a lack of supervision and of physical space, and was complicated by the dangers of traffic and the restrictions of private property.

There was very little family sharing in play and recreation. There was little of family excursions, family parties, and family play in the home, and the parents in the great majority of instances did not know, nor were they interested in, the actual play content of their children's lives. They were in no economic position to provide them with play materials; they

gave them very few suggestions as to how or what to play, and their primary consideration was that their children were not in physical danger or that they were not participating in play with children known to be delinquent.<sup>4</sup>

The primary regulations governing the play life of these children affected their hours of going and coming and, as a child grew older, there was a lengthening tether of freedom and a decreasing attention to even those minimal requirements of being present for meals and for bed-time.

### Commercial Recreations

Commercial recreations, of which the most outstanding was the motion picture theatre, claimed a large attendance. Only a handful of boys reported dance hall and poolroom attendance and the indications were that these were not as significant a factor in child life as other investigations have tended to indicate.

None of the blocks were located in areas having many commercial recreational facilities. Enjoyment of commercial recreations meant, in most instances, that the child had to leave the home block. Only several cafes, poolrooms, and a single public dance hall were on these local blocks. The latter had a bad reputation and did not apparently attract any of the local residents.

In one block the depression appeared to have adversely affected motion picture attendance, but in another block, a transition from a white to a negro population brought with it an increased motion picture attendance, despite a sharp lowering of economic status.

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<sup>4</sup>The study did not develop a very clear picture of the group structure of play life, and the absence of any clear indications of a formal group structure such as might exist in gangs is not to be accepted as an indication, necessarily, of the lack of such group structures among these children. It is necessary, rather, to maintain an open mind on this subject and to view the method of this inquiry as having been not well adapted to the study of that aspect of play life. This was inevitable, as the study was built around the evaluation of family life rather than around the evaluation of the child's own social world.

### Effects of the Economic Depression

The economic depression in 1931 and 1932 affected different blocks in varying degrees. One-third of the families were in relatively good circumstances and two-thirds had felt the pinch of poverty in various degrees, ranging from inadequate income to utter want. Fifty percent of the families had incomes below an adequate subsistence level. In two blocks there was a tremendous amount of mental and physical suffering, due to the lack of employment and the exhaustion of meager resources. Where home and work relief were being provided, the morale of the family was decidedly better than in those cases where financial stress was great but where no relief had yet been sought. The relief dole or made-work salary in many instances equaled the wage that the family head could earn in the job market.

Among families which had not been struck by the economic depression, there appeared to be an utter lack of perception of the general economic trend. There seemed to be no realization of the existence of an economic depression, nor did there appear to exist any concept of the nature and extent of the economic ills of the nation.

The actual monetary difference between depression and prosperity to most of the families in this inquiry was the difference of \$10.00 in the pay envelope. Most of this difference, during prosperity years, went into instalment payments for home comforts. Part of this difference in income, however, was absorbed, during the prosperity year, by higher commodity prices.

A most striking effect of the depression was the reduction in the number of working mothers. In one block the percentage employed dropped from 62% to 35%. It was this important reduction in mothers' employment that represented, in large measure, the transition of families from a comfortable to a precarious economic status. In another block in which the economic depression was less felt, the majority of mothers enjoyed steady employment, although at the expense of health and family life.

An outstanding effect of the depression was an increase in

mental tension. Worry, in many instances, occasioned family discord. Drunkenness and desertion seemed, in many cases, to be directly attributable to economic tension. There was not, however, much indication of conflict between parents and children over unemployment.

Children were sharply affected by the depression. Unemployment increased and wages were sharply cut, while boys under the age of sixteen were practically unable to obtain employment. In one block there was an increase in the number of older boys attending school, but in other blocks, the unemployed boys had made no serious use of their free time for either cultural or vocational training. In many instances it was indicated that mental tension over unemployment made it impossible for children to concentrate on studies.

### Health of Children

The only extensive source of information on the health of the children among the families in this study, namely, the sketchy and incomplete record cards of school pupils, indicated that the majority of these slum children were handicapped by poor health. Malnutrition, carious teeth, hypertrophied tonsils, obstructed nasal breathing, and defective vision, were common defects. School physical examinations recorded these defects through successive yearly tests of the same children, the majority of whom received no follow-up preventive medical care.

Where such follow-up care was attempted by philanthropic neighborhood health agencies, the antagonism of fearful parents and the throttling effect of peasant superstition interfered with the treatment of chronic ailments. As a result, medical care was usually sought only in the case of acute illness among children.

Considerable chronic ill-health among parents contributed substantially to the causes of unemployment and to a reduction of income below the subsistence level. The spacing of births was a serious problem among younger mothers and was met in some instances by the use of abortion, and contraceptive methods.

### Parental Supervision Over Children

Supervision over children decreased with their age. The progress was from mother's lap, to the floor, the hall-way, the street hall-way entrance, the gutter, the street itself, the street corner, near-by play spaces, supervised recreations (in a fraction of the cases), and finally, to commercial recreations, and unguided pleasures and social activities outside of the neighborhood.

The point of entrance into employment and the acquisition of an independent income, usually at about the age of sixteen, was often the period during which supervision was sharply reduced, especially with reference to the nature of the activities of the boys. Even among younger boys, supervision rarely involved an intimate contact with the social milieu of the child, and consisted usually of gross control over the time of home-coming and the avoidance of outstandingly disfavored individuals and places. Supervision for the youngest, save for those engaged in street occupations, such as shining shoes, and selling newspapers, emphasized the hours of home-coming and the restriction of play to the home block.

Discipline usually consisted either of physical punishment or of loud threats of punishment. Rarely were psychological methods of constructive guidance used.

The extent of parental control through supervision depended largely upon the cultural status of the family. Where there was disorganization in family life, control was least effective. Likewise in blocks where delinquency was greatest, controls were least effective. Thus, in Fleet street, and in Palm Street, during 1926, where delinquency was infrequent, there were few evidences of family disorganization, and there was great evidence of control over children of all ages.

The economic depression increased the effectiveness of parental control. It is possible that the reason was that unemployment gave the parents more time for supervision, and gave children less opportunity to avoid supervision through the independence that employment and consequent sources of income produce.



### Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

Major crime was an offense of first-generation Americans. Foreign-born parents, if arrested at all, were charged with minor violations of corporation ordinances and with disorderly conduct. The solidarity of the family, and consequently of community sentiment, affected the frequency of offenses against public policy—gambling, illegal liquor sale, narcotism and commercialized prostitution. In blocks where there were many broken homes, and many unattached lodgers and boarders, these offenses were frequent. But serious adult criminal gangsterism had its roots, not in a block of high population mobility, and of family disorganization, but in such a block as Tyler street, where a racial colony had resided for a generation. Here, the permanency of residence allowed the formation of delinquent associations from childhood, and the enmeshing of youths in a web of anti-social relationships.

Major crime met with punishment less frequently than minor offenses. Residents charged with such offenses as robbery, burglary and aggravated assault were usually discharged in the Magistrate's Courts, but those charged with such minor offenses as violations of the Sanitary code and of other corporation ordinances, were usually fined, or given a suspended sentence. Social supervision over offenders by the courts, through the use of probation, was a little-used instrument.

The extent of juvenile delinquency was far in excess of that formally recorded through arraignments in the Children's courts. The nature of adult anti-social behavior directly affected the extent of juvenile delinquency. In such a block as Palm Street, 1931, where the offenses of the adult population took place primarily among childless family and non-family groups, and consisted of carousing, gambling, and prostitution, there had appeared, as yet, no immediate effect on juvenile behavior. In such a block as Fleet street, where family standards were good, where supervision over children was adequate and where there was no adult gangsterism, juvenile delinquency was minimal. But where there was either first-generation American young

adult gangsterism, as on Tyler Street, or a concentration of demoralized old-immigrant family groups of chronic drunkards and ne'er-do-wells, with concomitant criminality and loose supervision over childhood, as on Parnell street, there was excessive juvenile delinquency.

In this study, the roots of juvenile delinquency in emotional frustration arising from unhappy parent-child relationships have not been explored beyond reference to the crudeness of methods of parental discipline. Parents contributed to the difficulty of analysis of the factors in delinquent behavior through their reticence in discussing the delinquencies of their own children. Environmental factors, such as gangs, unsupervised independent clubs, and a lack of in-door and out-door recreational facilities encouraged the spread of juvenile delinquency, by providing anti-social rather than socially constructive vehicles for activity during leisure hours outside of the home.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TYLER STREET—AN OLD-WORLD COMMUNITY

**T**YLER STREET, in common with the whole Lower East Side, was a block of diminishing population. Between the two survey years, there was a 25% loss both in families having boys and in boy population. The loss was primarily among younger children, so that in the latter survey year the block had a proportionately greater older boy population.

The population loss led to increased housing vacancy, lowered rentals, decreased incomes to landlords, and a resulting unwillingness to make necessary repairs, causing still further deterioration. The majority of the landlords were absentee owners.

The ultimate end of the slum in demolition and replacement by commercial, industrial, or higher type residential structures, has been fulfilled for parts of Tyler Street, which in 1937, form a part of Knickerbocker Village, a high type residential garden apartment community.

Tyler Street was a homogeneous racial community of Roman Catholic Sicilian Italians. In 1931, of 359 apartments, 344 were occupied by Italian families of whom more than two-thirds had lived on the block over ten years, and more than 40% had lived there more than twenty years. The great majority of families participating in the survey had lived on the block during both survey years. The solidarity of the community was enhanced by kinship groups, who often occupied flats in the same building, and by the intermarriage of children, who became settlers in the community.

Tyler Street was a cross-section of an Old-World community. The church was a controlling institution. Church fiestas and Saints' days were celebrated much as in the Old World tradition. The benevolent societies and associations of fellow provincials carried on old friendships and customs. Interests were local.

There were few visitors except insurance agents, rent collectors, or an occasional social worker, nurse, or doctor. Men depended largely on their friends in obtaining work. The majority had no interests outside of job, home, and fraternal society. In 1931, only four families had telephones.

The children were the chief modifiers of Old World tradition. The new ideas learned in the public schools and the acquisition of different occupations by the older children tended slowly to modify Old World thinking. Through the influence of secondary groups such as clubs and organizations, a certain degree of impact of the newer culture took place.

The persistence of Old World patterns among the parent group led to inevitable conflict with the children who sought to disentangle themselves from the cultural and vocational interests of the parent group. Children developed a deep sense of shame and inferiority over their origin and urged their parents to move away from the home block with its deterioration, congestion, and lack of personal privacy. The parents were frequently uncomprehending, having an attachment to the block and its associations. Parents accused children of being too fond of good times and of being unwilling to work hard and save money. Among many of the older boys, the inability of the parents to successfully transmit a philosophy of frugality led to loss of control. The result was that some of these took a short-cut to financial success through crime, in the selling of drugs, bootlegging, or in other rackets of gangland.

Tyler Street was a stronghold of the large family of the past generation, into which birth control had made only slight inroads. The proportion of children to adults was two children to one adult, a reversal of the proportion of one child to two adults in New York City as a whole.

The proportion of unbroken homes, i.e., having both parents living and present—(90% to 94%) was far above that for unselected samplings of American populations (70% to 75%). There were very few boarders and roomers. The great majority of the parents were foreign-born. There was a slight tendency toward an increase in the number of American-born parents who consisted primarily of married sons and daughters.

The slowness of the process of assimilation was strikingly indicated by the proportion of the population who still clung to the use of the native tongue. In 1931, one-third of the parents spoke only Italian, and the rest were bi-lingual, speaking Italian and English. In addition to the language disability, the handicap of these parents in meeting with current social problems may be gathered from the fact that in 1931 40.5% were totally illiterate; 39% could read in a foreign language only, and only 20.5% could read both in a foreign language and in English. Thus, an overwhelming proportion of the block residents obtained their interpretation of the American scene either from the foreign language press, or by word of mouth communication. This limitation of parental background tended to widen the breach between the parents and American-born children, with a resultant sense of parental inferiority and lack of authority in dealing with the social problems of their children.

Housing on Tyler House had been practically untouched by the improved standards of the Housing Codes of 1901 and 1914, since there was not a single "new law" building on the block. The physical status of Tyler Street was that of a deteriorated slum tenement area. During 1926-1930, 562 violations of the Housing Code were reported by Tenement House Inspectors against tenements on this block. The average house had fifteen violations. Violations included broken and unsanitary plumbing, dirty and unsanitary painted surfaces, broken plaster, broken window panes, broken floors and stairs, rusted and insecure fire escapes, absence of illumination in halls. There was a sharp reduction in the number of reports of violations during the period between the two survey years, not attributable, however, to an improvement in the physical condition of the block.

The majority of the fire escapes on this block were of the vertical ladder type which spell injury or death to children, the aged, and the infirm in the event of fire. The staircase fire escape of the type which appears on modern apartment houses did not exist on Tyler Street, not being compulsory.

Tenement flats were occupied almost exclusively as family dwellings, with practically none used for business purposes. Hardly a single apartment was occupied by an unmarried group

of men or women. One rear building, consisting of eight flats, occupied by a dissolute group of non-Italian white males, was a source of vigorous social disapproval among block residents.

The standard-size apartment consisted of either three or four rooms. Housing congestion, i.e., the number of persons per room, remained practically constant during the interval between the two survey years, varying between 1.4 and 1.6 persons per room. Rear houses, built on the back of the lot, were still in use.

The depression effected a reduction in average rentals, as well as an increase in the number of apartments given rent-free for janitor service. However, the great bulk of apartments in 1931 were still commanding rentals between \$15.00 and \$30 per month.

The physical comforts of the Tyler Street home represented crude contrast, obsolescence being found side by side with modern comforts. Thus, one fourth of the families had radios, yet practically all still used stoves for heating; the greater portion had electric illumination, yet most of them had no bath-tub and shared only a hall toilet with another family.

A single gain in the period between the two survey years was the increase in the number of families having hot running water, an increase from 5½% in 1926 to 48% in 1931.

Because of congestion, the home offered children a place neither for boisterous play nor for quiet study. The lack of sleeping quarters made for irregular and late hours for even the youngest children.

Culturally, the Tyler Street home was almost barren of literary influences, but was relatively abundant in evidences of music appreciation. Most homes had no books, but the majority had musical instruments, such as phonographs, radios, and pianos.<sup>1</sup>

The economic and social life of the block was affected by the fact that it was a push-cart market center. This fact affected

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<sup>1</sup> Characterization of Tyler Street as part of an interstitial slum area does not do justice to the great range of environmental backgrounds found in the different homes from the standpoints of intelligence, cultural interests, family solidarity, and ambitions. Within this single slum block lay home influences that gave evidence of leading, on the one hand, to professional careers and on the other hand, to prisons, jails, and institutions for the indigent.

the life of block residents in many ways. It was unnecessary for mothers to leave the block for marketing, and this constricted their circle of movement and intensified the provincialism of the colony life. The market provided occupations for many family heads and thus restricted their avenues of employment experience. It usurped the street and deprived children of their natural play-place. It caused street litter and led to carelessness in the disposal of waste materials and to a lack of pride in block appearance.

The block had an almost uniform dead level of economic and social status. The majority of the fathers were day laborers and not more than 15% were skilled or semi-skilled mechanics. There was not a single professional man, and hardly a white-collar worker on the block.

A majority of the mothers were commercially employed in 1926. Because of the extreme irregularity of the paternal income, 151 of 244 mothers were working, 49 outside of the home and 102 in the home. Of the latter, 97 were finishers of men's clothing.

Marital maladjustments appeared to be relatively infrequent. There was every evidence that the marriage tie was taken as a permanent one, to be endured at all costs. The sanctity of the home appeared to be an outstanding characteristic, and in only two instances was there direct evidence of marital infidelity, in both instances on the part of the husband. The small number of broken homes due to death of either parent may be attributed to the tendency to complete dissolution of the home and the placing out of the children in the event of death of either parent, among this economic class.

Parents had a limited range of interests outside of the home. Aside from benefit societies, the church was the chief social organization. Slightly less than one-third of the parents in 1931 claimed Catholic church membership. Labor unions and political clubs were fairly well represented among the men. The chief social interest of the Italian mother on this block outside of the home was the church. Thus the Italian immigrant parent on this block had social contacts either of a religious or a purely utilitarian nature. He sought death and sickness pro-

tection and, to a lesser extent, work protection, and political opportunity. Cultural and civic interests were relatively foreign to him.

The organizational interests of Tyler Street parents were markedly affected by the economic depression. Benefit society memberships dropped from 60% to 25%. Other affiliations, such as labor union membership and political club membership both suffered losses during the depression year.

Crime constituted a disintegrating social influence on this block. A study of court records disclosed more than an average number of arrests. Not only was there a greater proportion of offenses, but they tended to be more severe than those for the city in general. Whereas serious charges, i.e., felonies and misdemeanors, comprised 25% of all arrests in the city as a whole, they accounted for 37% of the arrests on Tyler Street. Young adults were the chief offenders.

There were no arrests for prostitution nor was there any evidence of the existence of prostitution upon the block. This is no doubt attributable to the strongly protective attitude taken by the Sicilian toward his female children and his fierce intolerance of female waywardness.

The most striking variable in the lives of these families between 1926 and 1931 was the economic depression. The economic depression, by 1931, had severely affected the home lives of the majority of the families on the block. An analysis of the economic status of 158 families in 1931 disclosed that 54 were in relatively adequate economic circumstances. Of these, four families were in good circumstances, with incomes that allowed for savings, and 50 had an income adequate only for continuance at a low economic and cultural level. The remaining 104 families had felt the pinch of poverty in various degrees; 57 had inadequate incomes, part-time employment, and a depletion of savings; 28 families were on the brink of financial disaster, being almost without income and with resources practically depleted; and in 19 cases family life was sustained only through home and job relief.

The morale in those families on relief was decidedly better than in those where financial stress was great but where no relief



had yet been sought. At this time public work and home relief had not yet been undertaken by the municipality, state, and nation. The misery of the people on this block was probably not as severe as it was to become during 1932 and 1933 and, therefore, the comparison of the two survey years does not completely illustrate the difference between prosperity and depression for families of this economic group.

However, the actual meaning of prosperity in dollars and cents to this marginal group was very slight, as compared to the tremendous millions that prosperity represented to the wealthier classes. Prosperity, to the average Tyler Street father meant ten dollars more in weekly wages, of which, part was absorbed, however, by higher prices.

In 1926 only 4% and in 1931, 24% of fathers were unemployed. Combined regular and irregular employment in 1926 was 81% whereas, in 1931, it was but 65%, with an additional 6% on part-time work supported by Emergency Relief funds.

The most striking economic result of the depression was the reduction in the number of working mothers, which fell from 62% in 1926 to 35% in 1931. Employment of mothers in the home garment industry dropped from 42% in 1926 to 21% in 1931. In the latter year the characteristic appearance of the Tyler Street home was no longer that of the miniature sweatshop, as described by the 1926 investigators. It was this important reduction in mothers' employment that represented, in large measure, the transition of families from a comfortable to a precarious economic status.

An analysis of change in economic status as affected by strictly depression causes in comparison with causes not necessarily due to depression, such as ill health, loss of the wage earner, or lack of competence, disclosed, in 1931, that, of 104 families that had felt poverty in various degrees, only 25 instances could be attributed to causes other than depression.

### The Social World of the Child

The average child on Tyler Street attained no more than an upper elementary school education and went to work at the

earliest possible age. This cramped educational experience was a static condition unaffected by prosperity or depression.

The relative influence of nursery schools and kindergartens increased between the two survey years. Although the child population below the age of six declined from 141 to 59, the nursery school and kindergarten attendance dropped only from 34 to 24. This may have been indicative of an increased interest in the welfare of the very young.

One depression gain was the increase in the number of older boys, ages 15 to 21 years, who were attending school, only 70% in that age group being out of school in 1931 compared to 82% in 1926. This school gain accreted primarily to secondary schools.

Correlated with a lack of school ambition was the unusual degree of school failure. Only 9% of Tyler Street boys were accelerated one or more terms as against 33.8% of all public school pupils; and 40% were retarded more than one term in contrast to 21.4% of all public school pupils. The rationalization of parents and children was that school failure was due to bi-lingualism. Unfortunately for this explanation, retardation did not diminish in the upper grades concomitant with an increase in English language facility, but, on the contrary, the proportion of retardation increased with age, indicative, possibly, of a deficiency in abstract learning ability.

The high proportion of school failure was strong evidence that the existing curriculum was not meeting the needs of these children. School failure among these children caused teaching and disciplinary problems, truancy, and over-valuation of employment as a means of release from an unwelcome situation. An analysis of attitudes toward school reported by school boys from this block disclosed 50 percent as disliking school.

Those boys entering high school consisted, frequently, of the brighter children who had been graduated from elementary school while still too young for commercial employment. The example of a group leader who had educational ambitions was seen to be a strong educational motivation among some boys. Very few of the boys in either survey year took advantage of vocational training opportunities or night school facilities. This

may be attributed to inadequate provisions for vocational guidance in the elementary schools.

Continuation schools, toward which considerable resentment was expressed during 1926, by 1931 appeared to have won a slow and reluctant acceptance among this community, illustrated by an increased percentage of attendance. There appeared, however, to be a considerable lack of correlation between the continuation school course taken, the boy's claimed ambition, and his work occupation.

The average boy on this block delayed consideration of his vocational future until he was either just leaving or had already left elementary school. The great majority of parents had either vague ambitions or no ambitions for their children. Those ambitions expressed by boys were primarily in the fields of the professions, mechanical trades, and independent tradesmen's callings. These ambitions represented a rejection of the manual labor status of their parents.

A major concern of Tyler Street boys was with employment. Prior to the legal working age, many were engaged in their free hours in street trades and in 1926, many assisted in the home garment industry. The depression year saw a decrease in the number of boys occupied on the streets during night hours, but a large increase in the number of boys employed as bootblacks. With few exceptions, boys during both survey years began work as soon as they were legally permitted to do so, the choice of employment being determined chiefly by the possibility of higher earnings.

The majority of boys were employed in jobs that had definite advancement opportunities. There was a high proportion engaged in skilled and semi-skilled trades. Boys were inclined to avoid their father's occupation. In both survey years only a small proportion of the boys obtained their employment through such impersonal agencies as newspapers, or employment bureaus. The great majority obtained their jobs through the intervention of friends and relatives.

There were varying periods of unemployment during both survey years, but the number of totally unemployed boys rose sharply in the depression year.

No adequate picture of the health status of Tyler Street boys can be given, but a successive series of school physical examinations given by Health Department physicians disclosed an average of three defects per boy, the characteristic trilogy being carious teeth, hypertrophied tonsils, and defective nutrition. Half of the boys had obstructed nasal breathing, one-third had defective vision, and one-tenth had defective hearing. Remedial facilities seemed to be utilized only at times of acute illness. Private physicians were favored over clinics. Adequate health habits were hampered by the lack of sanitary facilities. The taking of baths was seasonal. For 25 years the block has had nearly the highest tuberculosis rate in the city. These meager facts point to the need for a well-defined public health program among boys such as these.

An external view of the child's own social world disclosed that the slum home on this block had ceased to be a play center, the only important attraction in the home being the radio. Street play on the home block was hampered by the existence of a push-cart market. This lack of space made team play and games difficult if not impossible, and encouraged the practice of undesirable or dangerous types of play. Despite the lack of play space in the home and on the home street, the great majority of Tyler Street boys were not participants in supervised recreation, only 10% in 1926 and 13% in 1931 having been members of settlements or parish houses, despite the fact that four community centers were within several hundred feet of and five others were within walking distance of the block.

Outdoor supervised play on playgrounds and athletic fields was participated in by even a smaller proportion of Tyler Street boys, and those participating were usually below the age of 14. The majority of children engaged in unsupervised play in back yards, on roofs, piers, in hallways, and in the street.

Independent clubs, composed primarily of boys between the ages of 11 and 15 years, with membership fluctuating between six and ten members, were popular. Their chief purpose was athletics. The depression appeared to reduce markedly the number of such independent clubs. Pool-rooms and cafes were hang-outs for older boys.

Swimming, a major summer interest, showed a marked increase in attendance in 1931 over 1926. Country visits were very popular. Only the most limited use was made, during the summer-time, of school and other public playgrounds and settlement houses.

Summer camp attendance increased in 1931 as compared with 1926, indicative, probably, of a greater confidence in community centers and settlements, through whom the children were sent.

Correlated with the lack of utilization of supervised recreations, there was inadequate parental supervision. In the Tyler Street block, supervision was usually limited to gross control over hours of home-coming and mobility. Parental concern was almost entirely with reference to physical dangers.

With increased age, the tether of parental supervision lengthened and was accompanied by increased laxity in control. There was greater emphasis upon the hour of home-coming than upon the nature of activity. The primary activity of major concern was the fear of criminal and delinquent behavior. Children were frequently forbidden to play with certain other children, but there were few evidences of foresight or planfulness in guiding the play activities of children, and a surprising lack of interest in the activities promoted by settlements and other social centers.

In the depression year there was an increased degree of supervision, 86% receiving supervision over hours and 46% over activities during 1931, compared to 60% supervised for hours and but 11% for activities in 1926.

The decrease in employment of parents during the depression year may have been related to this situation. In 1926, 62% of all mothers and 96% of all fathers were employed. In 1931, only 35% of mothers and 75% of fathers were employed.

Disciplinary action was based generally on force or the threat of force, subtle motivation of behavior taking place among few families.

Historically, the Tyler Street block was an area of severe delinquency and criminality. The studies of the New York State Crime Commission in 1927 and 1930 adduce evidence on this point. The typical reaction of block residents on the question of

criminality was stubborn silence. One-fourth of the families made specific reference to its criminality but there was a strong tendency to regard the block as having improved in recent years.

Parents stated frequently that the idleness bred by the depression was leading their boys into delinquency, but were very protective in discussing the delinquencies of their children. Only one-half of one percent were reported as being delinquent. Regarding behavior that did not involve theft or other moral lapses, there was comparative frankness; and of those cases on whom parental reports were obtained, 25% of the children were reported as being either willful, non-cooperative, or disobedient. The majority of the non-conforming children fell in the age group between 10 and 14 years.

The great majority of parents evidenced marked fear of delinquency as a behavior outcome among their boys. Nearly every family visited either expressed thanks that their children had survived delinquent influences or expressed the hope that they might survive them.

It was not possible to get boys to admit that they were members of gangs. Nevertheless, some boys spoke of the existence on the block of delinquent gangs which they would not identify.

### CHAPTER THREE

## FLEET STREET—CROSS ROAD OF ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

**F**LEET STREET, the border-line between a Neapolitan-Italian and a Chinese settlement, had a population drawn from both races. The child life was predominantly Italian, however, as very few of the Chinese children participated in block activities.

The block has been relatively static in its composition. The nationality composition of the block had not changed in the interval between the two survey years. Sixty-four percent of the residents in 1931 had been resident during the 1926 survey. The proportions of parents of foreign and American birth remained the same. The proportion of unbroken homes did not vary significantly. The sole important change, an increase from 17% to 31% in the proportion of older boys, was itself a consequence of a static population.

The Italian residents of this block have made considerable cultural adaptation to their surroundings. The great majority of the parents spoke English fluently but continued the use of Italian in the home for cultural reasons. The literacy was relatively high. All homes had either foreign language or American newspapers, and the parents seemed aware of events beyond the confines of their immediate block.

Housing conditions were almost uniformly bad. Of 32 structures within the block, only five were "new law" apartments built since 1901; the remainder were old-type structures, with tiny ventilation shafts, or no shafts at all, vertical ladder-type fire escapes, deteriorated, ill-kept halls and yard toilets. Buildings ranged in height from four to seven floors and housed from 4 to 26 families.

Violations of tenement house regulations ranged from one to

38 per house, the average being 9.6. Both owner negligence and tenant carelessness were responsible causes. Among 284 violations issued, 78 were structural, 186 were due to owner negligence, and 14 to carelessness of tenants.

Due to owner negligence were inadequate fire-proofing, improperly constructed fire escapes and many forms of deterioration, including broken and rusty fire escapes, broken and leaky plumbing, falling plaster, torn wall paper, dirty walls and ceilings, broken stairs, etc. Carelessness by tenants was responsible for obstruction of fire escapes, accumulation of garbage in airshafts and accumulation of household goods on roof bulkheads. It was reported that Chinese merchants were gradually taking over ownership of buildings and were improving living conditions.

Mute testimony to the effort of residents to overcome unwholesome housing conditions, the majority of the homes were poorly furnished but clean. Only a few were comfortable or gave evidences of good taste. About 10% were either dirty or disorderly.

The characteristic Fleet Street home was a three or four room apartment, varying between \$20.00 and \$40.00 per month in rent. The layout of rooms resulted in a minimum of privacy. Heating and sanitary facilities in 1931 were as primitive as in 1926. The typical family got along without a bath-tub or running hot water, used a kitchen stove for cooking and heating, and shared a hall toilet with one other family. The greatest deprivation they reported was the lack of home bathing facilities.

Unbroken homes in which both true parents were living at home occurred in 76% of the families. In only 4 of 8 broken homes was the break one involving domestic disharmony, the others being simple breaks resulting from the death of a parent.

There was a large proportion of chronic ill health among Fleet Street parents. Eleven percent suffered from chronic diseases which affected the stability or happiness of family life. Among mothers the outstanding health hazard was child-birth, and fear of pregnancy and a desire to avoid it were revealed in interviews with many mothers. There was a tendency among the younger Italian women to utilize available birth control in-



formation and clinic facilities. Gossip stressed the frequency of abortion as a birth control measure.

The majority of Fleet Street fathers were unskilled laborers. The majority of Fleet Street mothers were not employed. In 1926, 71% of mothers and, in 1931, 81% cared only for their households. Those mothers employed outside of the home made substantial contributions to the family income, earnings ranging from \$10.00 to \$30.00 per week. Home industry paid less, the usual pay being under \$10.00 per week.

An analysis of the economic status of Fleet Street families during the 1931 survey disclosed an amazing amount of mental and physical suffering, due to lack of employment and the exhaustion of meager resources. Fifty percent of the families had incomes below an adequate subsistence level; 12% of these families were dependent on home and work relief.

Those families which were fortunate enough to secure public or private relief were in a relatively better position than those who, though in danger of destitution, had not applied for relief through pride, lack of initiative, or ignorance. The relief dole or salary, in many instances, almost equaled that which the family head could earn in regular employment.

To the average breadwinner on this block, the depression meant a reduction of \$10.00 in wages. This reduction caused many men to work at a less than family subsistence wage. Concomitant with the reduction in the earning capacity of the wage earner, there was a marked increase in the extent of unemployment, which rose from 4% in 1926 to 29% in 1931. Among 13 unemployed parents, 6 were completely idle and 7 were on work relief. In addition to unemployment and decrease in income, the normal insecurity of wage labor due to irregularity of employment, continued during the depression year to the same extent as in the prosperity year among those who were employed.

Despite the apparent homogeneity of the block population, there were broad ranges in the cultural status of its members, ranging, at one extreme, from individuals having a relatively broad social outlook, to the other extreme of uneducated, illiter-

ate and mentally backward families concerned solely with the immediate necessity of sustaining life.

On the whole, the social world of Fleet Street parents was extremely limited. The one outstanding institutional attachment of the majority of parents was the church, membership in which appeared to have increased greatly during the depression period. Only two other types of organization achieved minor gains during the survey period, labor union membership among fathers and settlement house attendance among mothers.

Mothers led a very restricted social life. Only a handful of mothers had social contacts outside of home and church. The limitation of social contacts was further indicated by the small proportion of families possessing telephones.

Evidences of cultural interests as determined by books and musical instruments indicated a marked lack of interest in literature, but a considerable interest in music. Nearly half of the families had radios.

The crime picture on Fleet Street was affected by its geographical location on the edge of Chinatown. Several gambling houses operating on this block catered exclusively to members of the Chinese race, and a large proportion of the arrests on this block were accounted for by raids on these gambling houses. It is doubtful that this form of gambling had any direct effect upon the Italian boy population.

In addition to gambling, the use of habit-forming narcotic drugs was another frequent basis of arrest of Chinese. There was no evidence at hand indicating a transmission of this habit to Italian adults or children.

Serious charges such as robbery, burglary, felonious assault, grand larceny, and the carrying of dangerous weapons were, in all save one instance, lodged against only Italian residents. Prostitution made an infrequent appearance. There was a marked absence of gossip concerning criminal behavior of block residents, but police reports indicated what was probably a normal incidence of pathological behavior, including suicides, injuries, accidents, and domestic difficulties.

Fleet Street residents expressed varied attitudes toward their block with reference to its location, housing facilities, and rentals.

Among social reactions were attitudes toward other persons and racial groups and toward opportunities for children. A majority of residents were favorable in their attitude toward the block. One-fourth of them were unequivocally condemnatory and expressed the desire to move at the earliest opportunity. The remaining three-fourths were either wholly favorable, judicious, or non-committal in their attitude. The chief malcontents were old residents.

The attitudes toward material advantages, such as rents and housing, were largely unfavorable. The social reactions, on the other hand, were very largely favorable. The great majority of the residents defended the block, either as being free from criminality or simply indicated their preference for it because of their friendships with other block residents.

Racial antagonism between Chinese and Italians appeared in a number of instances, rationalized in the psychologically interesting complaint that the Chinese were unclean.

The observations and attitudes of parents lacked acuteness, were at an uncritical, concrete level, and made but a poor appraisal of the block and its surroundings. The majority of the families were unable to express themselves on social or civic topics.

Civic attitudes were elicited in only three instances, dealing with crime and kidnapping, municipal corruption, and economic radicalism. Racial antagonism toward Chinese was expressed only covertly.

There was, in the depression year, a remarkable lack of expression of interest in economic topics.

Very few parents thought of the block in terms of its significance in the lives of their children. In not a single case was there spontaneous reference to a municipal playground that was just across the street.

Education was an ideal to a large proportion of parents. In 1926, during prosperity, many parents encouraged their children in their plans for high school and college training. Other parents, however, encouraged their children to evade the compulsory education laws, particularly those relating to continuation school.

The period of economic depression appeared to have blasted the hopes of higher education of most of the children on the block for, in 1931, no boys were in college and but three were in high school. There was an increased use in the depression year of public kindergartens and a loss in cultural education, such as in the use of the public library and taking of music lessons. Religious education rode against the tide; church and Sunday school attendance gained.

There was excessive school failure among elementary school children, gross retardation being 69% in contrast to 21.4% among all public school pupils in New York City. Similarly, acceleration was 10%, in comparison with 33.8% among all public school pupils.

Despite failure, of those interviewed, most children expressed a positive liking for school. Among older boys who had left school and were among the jobless, not a single one expressed a desire to or evinced an interest in returning to school until economic conditions might improve. All seemed, instead, intent upon securing employment. Continuation school was more frequently avoided than not.

Fleet Street boys had advantages of a type not available to children in other more congested blocks. The homes were less crowded, the street had no public market, the child population was relatively small in comparison with the total block population and there was ample play space both on the street and in an adjoining 2½ acre municipal playground.

In the home, the chief sources of recreation were musical instruments. There was, however, a trend toward the increase in mechanical instruments such as the victrola and radio, and a decrease in the number of pianos and violins. Few homes boasted of games or books.

The home was unpopular as a play center for older children outside of listening to the radio. The majority of the boys used the street as their natural play area despite the dangers of heavy traffic. Back yards and roofs were rarely resorted to as play places, roofs being considered unsafe and back yards being filled with débris. Despite the presence of a large playground at their very door-step, the mass pressure of children from other

blocks made it impossible for Fleet Street children to spend more than an hour a day in the playground.

Street games of paramount interest were baseball, punchball and handball. Games were played with a minimum of equipment.

Mothers spent more time, apparently, in seeking to have the street made a safer play place rather than in encouraging their children to use the adjacent playground. In 1926, through a parents' petition, the block was designated as a "play street."

In 1926 many self-organized clubs concerned mainly with athletics, figured in the play lives of children. The depression seemed to reduce the number of these clubs, particularly among the younger boys.

Summer recreations consisted primarily of swimming and family outings. There was a very slow acceptance of the idea of summer camping, although between 1926 and 1931 there was a slight increase in the number of parents availing themselves of this service.

The depression appeared to have had some specific effects upon play life. Children stayed near the home block due, perhaps, to a lack of spending money. Fewer boys attended the movies. There were fewer self-organized clubs, and memberships in supervised clubs in neighborhood and parish houses declined markedly.

There were fewer day outings, and only swimming and camp attendance and country visits seemed unaffected by unemployment.

Because the boy population on this block was so small, there were only a small number of older boys in the employed group. Their occupations did not represent a distinct occupational advance over those of their fathers because the fathers themselves represented a relatively diversified occupational group, of whom nearly one-half had left the ranks of unskilled labor. None of the boys had any apparent vocational guidance.

In both survey years the typical manner of securing employment was through friends or through street signs. The use of the newspaper and public and private employment agencies was practically unknown.

The working boys were skilled mechanics and unskilled laborers, few being white collar employees. The depression almost eliminated employment among the older boys of this block. In 1926, only two of 21 boys of working age were unemployed, but in 1931, 16 of 22 were idle. Those who were employed in 1931 had dead-end jobs without opportunities for advancement.

Not only did the depression all but eliminate employment among older boys, but it also slashed the incomes of those who had jobs. In 1931 only one boy earned above \$9.00 per week.

Another marked effect of the depression was the practically complete elimination of part-time work for younger boys. In 1926 the acceptance of economic responsibility on the part of younger children was particularly commented upon, but few were employed in 1931.

There were surprisingly few evidences of loss of morale as a result of unemployment. Boys had apparently not yet given up the fond hope that "prosperity was just around the corner" and were still actively seeking jobs. Not a single one of the unemployed boys, however, was making adequate use of his free time for purposes of educational or cultural training.

The health standards of the block appeared to have been low in both survey years. There were relatively frequent cases of mental and constitutional diseases. Preventive health measures seem to have been an unknown quantity, and health was given special consideration only in times of acute illness. The school physical examinations appeared to have been ineffective in stimulating a better health attitude on the part of children and parents. The majority of children had not received physical examinations by the Department of Health physicians in the years between 1926 and 1931, as indicated by the individual school record cards of these children.

Among the small group of children who were examined, not a single child was free from defect, the common ones being carious teeth, defective nutrition, poor vision, hypertrophied tonsils, and obstructed nasal breathing. Despite the availability of free medical service, only a small proportion of boys underwent examinations at health centers and hospitals.

The outstanding outdoor play center for children was the adjoining Columbus Park playground. Church clubs, settlement house clubs and extra-curricular school activities comprised the remainder of supervised recreation. The playground, because of its popularity, was inadequate as a play space for all children. It was too frequently monopolized by older ball players who drove away the younger children.

Whereas, prior to 1926, supervised indoor recreation appeared to be on the increase, in the depression year it had definitely decreased. Church club memberships had dropped from 46 in 1926 to 15 in 1931 and local settlement house memberships had dropped from 8 in 1926 to none in 1931. Extra-curricular school activities likewise suffered a loss.

The block itself had only several commercialized recreations, such as cafes and pool-rooms. These, as well as other pool-rooms, cafes, and motion picture theatres in the immediate neighborhood, were patronized by the older boys. The greatest appeal to all boys was made by the motion picture, but there was a tremendous slump in patronage apparently occasioned by the depression, the greatest decrease being among boys below working age.

Parental supervision was strongly operative, even among the older boys. In 1926 the majority of the boys spent their play time on the home block or in the neighborhood. In 1931 practically all boys were supervised with reference to their hours of home-coming and the majority with reference to their activities. Whereas parental control was moderately adequate, it appeared to be a control which dealt largely with superficial, outward aspects of child behavior, rather than with its finer, psychological aspects. Most of the parents were content to know that their children were on the block and were playing with children whom they knew, but the content of their children's play program apparently meant nothing to them.

Both in 1926 and 1931 there was a minimum of juvenile delinquency, a finding which correlated significantly with the lack of adult delinquency in the same block. Not only did the official figures indicate relatively little juvenile delinquency but the

block gossip and interviews with boys yielded very little information relative to delinquent behavior, gang organizations, etc. There appeared to be amicable relationships with the police.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>There is a possible connection between the delinquency status of this block and the fact of ample play space for the children in a large adjoining municipal playground. On the other hand, the majority of the children spent very little of their time in the playground.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PARNELL STREET—AN OLD SLUM

PARNELL STREET, sandwiched between Lower West Side office buildings, was a block of stable and slightly increasing population. Sixty-two percent of the families found in 1932 had been included in the 1926 survey. The replacement of families affected in only a slight degree the nationality status of the block. The only increase of any importance was the addition of a small number of American-born families. Otherwise, the block population, comprising Irish and Irish-Americans, Czechoslovakians and other Slavic groups, Greeks and Syrians, maintained in 1932 the same proportions as in 1926.

From an examination of its economic status, type of occupations, and nationality status, the block may definitely be said to have had cultural continuity during the period between the survey years. Whatever changes occurred during the six-year period must be ascribed to the effects of the industrial depression or to processes of assimilation.

The constituency of the population was relatively alike in the two survey years, save for an increase in the proportion of older boys. The majority of the parents were of foreign birth, and the majority of the children were of native birth.

The type of life of the Parnell Street family was affected by the type of structure in which it dwelt. The houses were more than a century old, many having been erected in colonial times. Rooms were very small and consisted, usually, of units of twos, an inner sleeping room and an outer living room. Large families occupied two of these miniature flats, thus having a front parlor facing the street, a back kitchen facing the yard and two inner bed rooms having no direct light or ventilation.

Despite the depression, the tendency was in the direction of larger living quarters for the average family. Families occupy-

ing two rooms dropped from 61% to 41% and those occupying four rooms rose from 26% to 37%, from 1926 to 1932. This improvement in housing conditions cannot be attributed to rental reductions alone, the average rental having dropped only \$1.40 per room per month, for this approximately 20% rental reduction was accompanied by an equal, if not greater, reduction in wages. The reduction in housing congestion may, therefore, be regarded as due to improved health habits and health interests, or to the necessity of providing enlarged quarters for increased numbers of adolescent children, or perhaps, to both.

There was still, however, unbelievable crowding in many families. In many, there were still five and six persons in two rooms. In one case there were eight persons living in two rooms.

In hardly a single family could the housing situation be considered adequate. As the average family consisted of six members, there was over-crowding, lack of privacy, no space for recreation or study, and no possibility of decent hours of retiring. The cramped conditions under which these families lived affected most drastically the manner of life of Parnell Street boys. Few remained in the house any longer than was necessary. On rainy and cold days, the boy's time was usually divided between the movies and the small candy stores on the street.

The conditions of living were antiquated, the typical home being early nineteenth century in its sanitary facilities. Practically all of the homes were without bathtubs or hot water, in 1932 as well as in 1926. There was an increase in the number of private toilets, due, apparently to the taking over by many families of either the rear or the front flat, including the toilet formerly shared by two tenants, on the same floor.

More families had gas illumination than electricity. The oil lamp was still used. There was only stove heat and the old-fashioned kitchen range, fed by wood kindling, was the typical method of heating. Despite primitive sanitary facilities, the homes gave, with few exceptions, the impression of great cleanliness.

The ownership of the houses on this block was said to be largely in the hands of operators having controlling interests in surrounding sky-scrapers. The low buildings of Parnell Street,

hedged in among tall office buildings, provided sunlight and ventilation protection for the latter.

There was no contact between the tenants and the owning corporations, but only with their agents who collected the rentals and acted as buffers in the handling of complaints. As a result of this absentee ownership, there appeared to be no moral responsibility on the part of any individual for housing conditions existing on the block.

The majority of Parnell Street fathers were unskilled laborers. Not a single parent was, in either survey year, a clerical, commercial, or professional worker. Many of them were occupied as office building porters in the surrounding sky-scrapers.

The depression resulted in greater irregularity of employment, more actual unemployment, and a reduction in the income of those men who remained employed. Regular employment dropped from 83% in 1926 to 59% in 1932. Actual unemployment rose from 2% in 1926 to 17% in 1932. The median income dropped from \$27.50 to \$23.50 per week, representing a loss of \$18.00 per month.

The great majority of the mothers worked outside of the home as office cleaners, janitresses, or both. Their hours of employment represented a cruel adaptation of necessity to the requirements of modern business. The majority of these mothers worked either from dawn, or before, or in mid-afternoon, when their school-children required their presence. For the majority of these mothers, their daily round required an extraordinary outlay of strength and endurance.

The average mother worked several hours from dawn to breakfast, then took care of her house work, and worked late afternoon and early evening again in the office buildings, returning to snatch a short sleep until she had to rise again. This program was ruinous to health, interfered with proper child care and nutrition, and destroyed in large part, the possibility of parental supervision of child life.

Although a majority of the families on this block were adversely affected by the economic depression, the fact that the mothers had steady employment, although at the expense of health and family life, enabled these families to remain above

the economic subsistence level. The relative absence of physical want seemed to be reflected in the lack of worry over economic conditions.

Although actual medical data were lacking, there appeared to be a considerable degree of chronic illness among the parents. Among the chronic physical conditions represented were paralysis, cardiac disease, arthritis, varicose veins, goiter, high blood pressure, and general debility. In 25% of the families, either the father or the mother suffered from chronic disease. Among the wives, illness appeared to be related to their excessively severe toil as charwomen, an occupation which was added to their normal duties as housewives. This additional occupation they had to continue in the face of evident ill health.

The cultural status of these families appeared to be generally very low. There was not a single family in which the parents could be characterized as either intelligent or educated. Despite their cultural lag, a few of the parents seemed to be interested in furthering the education of their children.

In 1932 approximately half of the parents spoke only their native European language, the remainder using both their native language and English, or English exclusively. A large proportion of the mothers and a small proportion of the fathers admitted total illiteracy. Slightly more than half claimed ability to read in a foreign tongue and about one-third claimed to read English with ease. Many parents purposely used the native tongue in family life to enable their children to acquire it.

The extent of English usage among these families was indicative of considerable assimilation. Few of the families on this block could be regarded as still of immigrant status. There was little evidence that any of these families sprang from a good cultural stock abroad. In not a single home was there found a book or magazine in their native language. Their adaptation to the American scene seems to have been only on a vocational level, as seen from the barrenness of their homes and the lack of American cultural influences. Both in 1926 and in 1932 practically no books were observed.

The lack of communication between these families and contacts outside of the block was indicated by the fact that only three

had telephones. The radio had made remarkably little progress, only eight families possessing them in 1932. Only two families had pianos and about one-third had phonographs. Thus musical interests were less well developed than on other blocks.

The institution having the greatest membership both in 1926 and 1932 was the church, although, in the latter year, there appeared to be a reduction in the number of fathers who were members. The church appeared to be of absorbing interest and was the single institution around which family life seemed to center.

Significant and surprising was the small number of parents who were members of neighborhood settlement houses, despite the intensive health and recreational program of the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association, which had its building in a nearby block. In 1926, three mothers and no fathers, and, in 1932, no parents at all were members of that center. No parent was a member of any other neighborhood center despite the fact that several other centers were in the immediate neighborhood. This lack of utilization of neighborhood facilities may be in part explained, for the mothers, as being a result of a lack of time and opportunity.

Fraternal associations composed of fellow country-men were important institutions in 1926, but the depression appeared to have eliminated practically all these memberships, with a resulting contraction in the social life of the parents. The majority of the parents, however, were without group affiliations of any sort, outside of the immediate family and friendship circle.

In connection with club affiliations, occasional family parties and picnics took place. Very few of the parents attended the movies, and, during the free time of both parents, it was their custom, generally, to rest at home.

Despite the physical discomfort, congestion, and squalor in which most of these families lived, the majority were surprisingly complacent, and even favorable, in their attitude toward their manner of living and toward the block in which they lived. Among 64 families interviewed in 1932, only 11 ventured a positive expression of criticism. The proportion of favorable atti-

tudes was higher among those who lived on the block the longest, in contrast to the situation in Fleet Street.

The judgments that were expressed were of a markedly non-intellectual order, dealing primarily with the immediate physical requirements of material existence and left the impression that the majority of the residents were either dull, uninformed, or both. There were several compensating features, among their attributes, however. There appeared to be no racial or nationality prejudices, a status which was reported likewise in 1926. Neighborly kindness seemed to be a dominant note and was reflected among the children, who seemed very friendly in their relations with one another.

Individual families were less fortunate, and some neighbors were caustically critical of those families whose moral and ethical standards seemed to them to be below par. The community, as a whole, seemed closely knit. The people knew a great deal about each other's affairs and talked about them freely.

The proportion of crime among adults appeared to be relatively similar to that for the same offenses throughout the city. Certain types of cases were noticeably absent, such as arrests for prostitution or violation of the Prohibition law. Both, however, were common offenses on the block and were openly discussed by residents.

Not all of the offenses could be attributed to true residents of the block, as one lodging house on the block frequented by Negro laborers and white derelicts was responsible for a considerable number of arrests, primarily those involving gambling and begging.

Among the serious felony cases, there was a high proportion of dismissals and discharges. Among the less serious charges, however, convictions were more frequent. On minor offenses, the most usual punishment was a small fine or a suspended sentence without probation.

Although the official statistics indicated the block to be average in number of arrests, a more intimate picture obtained from interviews with block residents and from resident workers in a nearby neighborhood house, indicated a high proportion of criminal and anti-social behavior among these families.

In 1932, 15 of 65 families with boys, or 23%, were implicated in crime or serious social maladjustment. There had been five cases of desertion and adultery, three of drunkenness and assault, one suspected case of incest, two of juvenile delinquency, one case of operation of a disorderly house, one professional bootlegger, and several cases of delinquency among older boys.

Criminality was more pronounced among the older block residents. Among 62 families, of whom 30 had lived on the block for periods ranging up to ten years, and 32 for periods from ten years up to fifty years, there was 21% of crime and family discord among the more recent residents and 57% among the older residents. This suggests that some sort of selective process had gone on, by means of which the better types of families had moved from the neighborhood following short periods of residence, leaving a residuum of families with a criminalistic behavior pattern. Evidence of this type suggests that the development of local crime patterns operates through population selection as well as through social transmission of anti-social attitudes.

In these families chronic alcoholism accompanied and intensified social discord. Among the members of 23 discordant or criminalistic family groups, there were 13 instances of chronic drunkenness. Among 44 families in which there was no criminal behavior or discord, there was only one case of chronic drunkenness.

The primary factors responsible for domestic discord in 1932 appear to have been alcoholism, sexual disloyalty, unemployment, mental diseases, and the psychological effects of the depression.

Despite the large proportion of family disorganization and discord, the external evidence was that the majority of the parents appeared to have had normally adequate family relations. Among ten families, an exceptionally pleasant atmosphere was recorded.

The social world of the average Parnell Street boy was a narrowly restricted one. Among the younger boys, it meant play on the home street, in the backyard, or on adjacent blocks, trips to a

nearby park and playground, less than a block away, and to the water front, a stone's throw from their homes.

Until its doors closed, the Bowling Green Neighborhood House was the outstanding recreational influence of the block, and a considerable portion of the spare time of the boys from the ages of six to seventeen years was centered there. The home hardly counted as a play place, and the movies were the outstanding commercial resource, making an almost universal appeal. During the summer, the program was somewhat varied by camp attendance and swimming. In general, there was not a great deal of play activity, most of the boys being occupied in working for pay, or being kept busy gathering the family supply of kindling wood. A certain amount of influence was wielded by individually-organized social clubs which contributed to the delinquency of several boys on the block.

Commercial recreations made but a small appeal to the boys of this block. There was one small pool-room which some of the more mischievous boys made their hang-out, and two pool-rooms on an adjoining street were frequented, one of which had a very excellent reputation for orderliness.

In both survey years, the majority of working boys were engaged in unskilled tasks. In both years the work of the boys was more diversified than was that of their parents, but, in general, did not represent a higher occupational status. Most of the boys worked at jobs that were without a future, such as shining shoes, peddling newspapers, and running errands.

Among the boys, unemployment increased from 17% in 1926 to 26% in 1932. In addition, wages were sharply cut. In 1926, minimum wages were \$15.00 a week, and earnings ran as high as \$25.00 per week; whereas, in 1932, the top salary was \$19.00, and the majority of the boys earned less than \$10.00 a week. Boys under the age of 16 were practically unable to get work.

In neither year was employment sought in a systematic manner. Employment agencies, newspaper advertisements, and other impersonal means were not utilized. The boys depended on the aid of friends and direct personal inquiries.

Guidance in the selection of a vocation, or in the choice of vocational training was extremely rare. In 1926 no boy, either at



school or at work, had ever received vocational guidance or advice. In 1932 there were six instances of guidance, of which four involved educational guidance through trade training.

Only a small number of boys expressed a desire for either future education or a specific occupation. Only two parents had any conception in either direction. The great majority of parents and boys had only the vague idea of a job. Where ambitions were expressed by boys, however, all were definitely in advance of the job status of the parents.

One-third of the boys between the ages of 10 and 14 years were occupied after school at part time occupations, such as watching automobiles, selling newspapers, shining shoes, running errands, helping in their fathers' stores, and gathering kindling wood for the family. Although only about one-third of these boys were so recorded, the probability was, from observations, that practically all of them spent a part of their time at some type of part time job, such as the gathering of wood for kindling.

Most of the boys, both younger and older, seemed extremely industrious and interested in having work. The economic depression may, however, have had its effect upon industriousness through frustrating the worth-while ambitions of the older boys.

The great majority of Parnell Street boys completed their schooling in the elementary school. This situation held true in both survey years. Among both children and their parents, interest in education was luke-warm. The prevailing idea was to secure working papers when legally permissible and to get a job as soon as possible. The majority of the older boys were merely marking time in the upper grammar school grades until they should be eligible for working papers. Both to parents and children secondary education under such circumstances was meaningless.

Lack of interest in education was correlated with lack of school success. In 1932 the majority of school-boys were retarded, 40% of them being retarded three or more terms.

School failure did not appear to be related to delinquent behavior. The majority of boys were well-behaved in school and regular in attendance. Well-defined school conflicts were discovered in a small percentage of the cases. There was no indi-

cation that child guidance principles were utilized in dealing with these problem cases.

The need for specialized remedial teaching was seen in the large number of children who had specialized defects, as in arithmetic, reading, speech, and penmanship.

Among those children having ambitions for future training, the majority favored either mechanical trades or technical training at a professional level. Electrical engineering and the electrician's trade were the most popular, an explanation for which may lie in the fact that a number of older brothers had taken the electrical course previously in continuation school.

The majority of boys dodged continuation school whenever they could, and but few of those required to attend were in attendance.

Cultural education outside of school hours, such as musical and language studies, was proportionately decreased in the depression year. Library attendance was infrequent in both survey years. The boys claimed that they were too busy to read, but this did not prevent them from reading the tabloid newspapers regularly.

The depression year seemed to have reduced the number receiving religious instruction, although the number who attended church increased greatly. It would appear that in the depression year parents substituted child church attendance for class instruction in religion.

The majority of Parnell Street boys had adequate health examinations at hospitals and clinics. The Bowling Green Neighborhood Association was responsible for the majority of the examinations, which were given in its neighborhood center.

There was only partial effectiveness in carrying out the remedial treatment of defects disclosed in health examinations. Among 95 boys who had been examined, 51 were apparently without defect at the time of the 1932 survey, but 44 with defects remained untreated.

Intimate contacts with families disclosed a remarkable degree of ignorance regarding child and infant care. This was true in both survey years. The inability to maintain a balanced diet and the persistence of feeding problems were among the chief com-

plaints of the younger mothers. This problem was closely related to the lack of parental supervision occasioned by the employment of a large proportion of the mothers. In some cases, there was either apathetic non-cooperation by the parents in the health program of the neighborhood house, or even active opposition and hostility.

It is difficult to compare the physical status of the children in the two survey years, but the evidence would seem to indicate greatly increased health defects during the depression year. The majority of the boys in this study had been examined in school in 1932 by Board of Health physicians. Practically all of the examinations disclosed defects. There was no indication from the school records that an effective or aggressive health improvement campaign by educational authorities took place as a result of these examinations.

A study of the supervision by parents over children disclosed a relationship between family solidarity and effective measures of supervision. Among families in which there was domestic discord or criminal behavior, the degree of child supervision was less than among normal families. In the majority of instances, in both groups, the parents were concerned only with the formal aspects of supervision, requiring the children to be in at a fixed hour without regulating their type of play or their whereabouts. Disciplinary methods were hardly in evidence. There was neither effective punishment nor the use of constructive measures of control.

The behavior of the children was in general indicative of this lack of control, the older boys seeming indifferent and the younger boys insolent. Among the older boys non-supervision reached such a point that their homes were merely places in which to sleep.

Supervision varied with the age of the boys. Among 120 boys, 50, who were said by parents to be supervised both with regard to hours of home-coming and activities, were, with two exceptions, below the age of fourteen years.

Among those who had no supervision, the majority were above the age of fourteen although there was no supervision among some children as young as eight years of age.

A close study of juvenile delinquency in both survey years indicated that the lives of a considerable proportion of the boys were affected by disorganized and unsupervised family backgrounds. Gangs, unsupervised clubs tending toward criminal patterns, habitual gambling, individual and group thefts, excessive intoxication, street fights, and wayward behavior of unsupervised younger boys were reported to field investigators.

The most illuminating facts concerning juvenile delinquency came from the boys themselves. The parents were either reticent or ignorant of this aspect of their children's behavior.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PALM STREET—A CONFLICT OF CULTURES

**I**N 1926<sup>1</sup> the Palm Street block, located in lower Harlem, had two predominant racial and nationality populations, Jews and Spanish Americans, and a sprinkling of other North and South European nationalities. In this year the block, in common with many others in the vicinity, was undergoing a process of unusually rapid population transition, representing a great migratory movement of Spanish American families from Cuba, Porto Rico, and South American countries.

This new migration was met with great hostility by the predominant Jewish population, with the result that, at the time of the initial survey, the block represented an area in cultural conflict. The Jewish population, in this instance, regarded themselves as the superior group, being a relatively prosperous middle-class community who occupied large comfortable apartments.

The houses on this block were comfortable, well-built five-story apartment houses, equipped with modern conveniences and, in many instances, having elevator service. Rentals ranged from \$40.00 to \$150.00 per month.

There was little congestion on the whole, the average apartment consisting of five rooms and the average congestion being 1.1 persons per room. With the exception of a few families having lodgers, there was available a living room of good size or a combined living room and dining room. The only unattractive and possibly unhealthful apartments were those in the basements occupied by the families of the janitors.

In general, these apartment buildings were clean and well-

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the marked change in cultural status of the block in 1931 as compared with 1926, Palm Street has been described and summarized for the two survey years separately.

lighted but many of them were said to be not as well kept as formerly, and were beginning to show signs of the transition from Jewish to Spanish American occupancy, because the owners were not keeping up physical standards as heretofore.

In addition to the differences in customs and language, the Jewish population regarded the Spanish American influx as a threat to property values. This invasion tended, in their opinion, to depreciate the potential selling price of property. In addition, they regarded the new immigration as carrying with it tendencies that would result in the deterioration of the neighborhood, for the incoming immigration lived in a more congested way, several families or one family and several boarders living in a single apartment.

This immigration led to a rapid evacuation of the block by the Jewish families which, in 1926, was in full swing. The withdrawal was peaceable in so far as this block was concerned, but was not so peaceable in adjoining blocks where several bitter race riots among rowdy elements occurred. Race prejudice was expressed by approximately 25% of the parents studied in this survey.

A closer analysis of the types of complaint against the incoming population disclosed that the conflict was not merely between two different cultures but between a higher expression of one and an inferior expression of the other, the new immigration being inferior, not only to the block group with whom they were in conflict, but as representatives of their own culture. From this standpoint, we may regard the block as in transition from a middle-class neighborhood to a slum.

The unfriendliness and conflict between the parents was reflected in the attitude and spirit of the children, who mingled to an extent on the street but did not mingle in their homes.

In 1926, the families in a sampling of one-third of the block population were surveyed. These families were found to consist, in part, in addition to parents and children, of lodgers, boarders and other relatives. The latter were most frequently found in the Spanish American and Negro families. The Jewish families rarely shared their homes with relatives and strangers.

The child population was composed primarily of children

below the age of sixteen, a factor which affected in many ways the social patterns of the block. Whereas the great majority of the parents were born outside of the United States, the majority of the children were born within the United States. The children of the Jewish, Protestant and Catholic European, and Negro parents were American-born and possessed an American cultural background. The majority of the Spanish American boys, however, were born in Porto Rico and Cuba and had a Spanish American cultural background. The small proportion of American-born boys of Spanish American parentage was indicative of the recency of Spanish American immigration.

In three-quarters of the cases, the boys lived in normal families in which both parents were living and at home. The majority of the remainder of the families were broken by the death or absence of one or both parents. In general the homes gave no appearance of inadequacy. Economic pressure and domestic discord existed in only a few instances.

Most parents were bi-lingual, speaking both English and a foreign language. English was said to be the usual home language, although no tabular record was made in the earlier survey.

With the exception of one mother, all parents had some education, the range extending from a few years in elementary school to college and university training. The majority of parents read more than one language and in homes where English was not spoken or read with ease, a foreign language newspaper was read. These latter included news similar to that found in the English papers and through them parents were kept informed of current local and national events.

In this block, in 1926, the process of cultural assimilation had reached the point where the parents were probably in touch with somewhat the same cultural content as were their children.

The majority of the fathers and more than one-third of the mothers had organization affiliations and interests in 1926. The Negroes were proportionately the greatest joiners, next in order being Jewish fathers. Those whose interest centered most in home life were the European non-Jewish mothers. The majority of the organization affiliations was in benefit and fraternal socie-

ties, and represented a desire for social mingling and protection, very little of it being concerned with new intellectual experiences.

There was an indication of distinct nationality preference for certain types of organizations. There was no formal religious affiliation among the Jewish parents, but all of the Negro parents and a goodly fraction of the Spanish American mothers had church affiliations. On the other hand, the bulk of benefit society memberships was among the Jewish fathers.

There was a marked lack of parental interest and participation in neighborhood and community activities, such as parent-teacher groups or settlement house groups. The distinct impression was that this block was not part of an integrated neighborhood.

A study of adult crime and delinquency on the block disclosed that, whereas there were many cases of gambling, prostitution and assault, not a single case concerned a parent of the boys in this study. The offenders were drawn either from families without children, families whose children were already grown, or from the mobile group of lodgers and other non-family groups who occupied the block.

There was a wide range in the occupations of the fathers, the majority being in skilled trades, commercial occupations and in the professions. Approximately one-third were laborers. Thus this block was definitely one of relatively superior occupational status.

An analysis of occupational distribution by nationality disclosed that the greatest proportion of merchants or businessmen was among the Jewish fathers. The non-Jewish European population tended to be either laborers or skilled mechanics, and the Spanish American fathers were usually unskilled laborers, skilled mechanics, or small merchants.

There was a wide range in fathers' weekly earnings, from \$20.00 to \$100.00 per week.

Unemployment was insignificant and no acute economic distress existed. Among the poorer families there was supplementation of income through the maintenance of lodgers or through janitorial service.

Slightly more than one-third of the mothers were engaged in work outside of household duties, 14 at occupations in the home



and 8 in employment outside of the home. Home work consisted of needle work or janitorial service. All of the mothers working outside of the home had made adequate plans for the care of their children either through provision of maid service or through relatives or friends.

In 1926 the educational ideal was very strong among Palm Street parents and children. With the exception of a few boys among the poorest families, the majority expected to complete high school and a goodly number expected to complete college. The boys helped toward this goal usually by working their way through school. Throughout the entire block, not a single parent made the slightest criticism of a boy's attitude toward his studies.

Formal religious instruction did not play an important role among the boys in this block. In a proportion of cases, Roman Catholic and Hebrew instruction was given. There was very little religious instruction given to Spanish American and Negro boys. Among the Jewish families in this block, however, the influence of formal religion was greatly minimized. These families had traveled a long distance on the road away from orthodoxy and whereas many insisted that their children should achieve confirmation through Bar Mitzvah, they themselves did not attend religious services, save on holidays. Most of the Spanish and Porto Rican Catholic families were waiting to have their own church in order that their children might attend.

The great majority of the boys received no cultural education, and those that did, usually studied music. A degree of cultural education among Jewish boys consisted of instruction in the Hebrew language, but this instruction was not given for long periods, and most of the boys did not achieve real proficiency in reading or writing the language.

A near-by public library was used by a sizable group of 12-14 year old school boys in connection with homework. Only a handful of boys admitted any fondness for reading. The tabloid newspapers, however, appeared to be very popular.

The majority of the younger boys on the block had strong educational ambitions.

The home was a recreational center in many instances, with marked nationality differences, however. No Negro boys ap-

peared to have had home amusements. The Spanish American boys had home musical interests and, among the Jewish boys, reading of library books was the most popular home amusement.

Most of the boys had games and interesting toys and, in a large proportion of the homes, there were musical instruments, of mechanical and stringed varieties, and radios. Music appeared, however, to be a habitual source of recreation among only a small proportion of the boys.

The majority of the boys, save the very young and those absorbed in work or study, played on side-walks, streets, or roofs. Handball, football, coasting, and skating were among the organized games of the older boys, and bicycle-riding, roller skating and side-walk games were enjoyed by the younger boys.

Play space was at a premium. The nearest park playground was inaccessible to younger children because of heavy traffic. Other park space was used surreptitiously by children who resented being driven away by the police because the space was not intended for play.

Street play tended to break down racial prejudices through the participation of boys of different nationalities in the same games.

In 1926, nearly two-fifths of the boys between the ages of 10 and 20 years participated in indoor supervised recreation. A wide range of organization interests was represented, including memberships in Y. M. C. A.'s, Y. M. H. A.'s; school, church, athletic and social clubs; and in the Boy Scouts and Catholic Boys' Brigade.

Participation in organized sport and recreation began as early as the age of eight and continued until the late 'teens, when the competition of dances and parties reduced the number sharing in formal groups.

Many boys were members of several organizations and had traveled from one to another at different periods. Only a small number of the boys belonged to self-organized, independent clubs. These clubs, with the exception of one, were for the purpose of athletics.

An analysis of the nationality response to supervised recreations disclosed that the Negro and Spanish American children

had inadequate opportunities for supervised group play. Not a single Negro boy and only four Spanish American boys were members of supervised recreational groups. The great bulk of memberships were among the native American boys of European and Jewish parentage.

The block was singularly free from commercial recreations. There was only one public dance hall at the corner. This hall, which had earned a bad reputation because of the fights and shooting that had occurred there, did not attract any of the boys from the block.

Neighborhood motion picture theatres were popular, approximately one-half of the children having attended the local movies once or twice a week. The movies were most popular among the boys between the ages of 10 and 14 years. A number of mothers opposed motion pictures in the belief that they were not a good influence. Only two boys attended dance halls, and one attended a pool-room.

During the summer, few boys attended camp, although many expressed keen interest in camping. Country visits were a more usual experience. At least thirty boys had been to some country resort, either on a vacation or through doing part-time work for relatives. Many boys attended day outings.

Summer recreational opportunities were reserved almost entirely for the white American boys of Jewish and European parentage. Practically none of the Spanish American and Negro boys had the pleasure of either country visits or day outings.

No especial study was directed, in the 1926 survey, toward the problem of health. The family case studies disclosed few instances of ill health, of which all but one were among the children of janitors. Medical attention was sought only in cases of illness. A very few families consulted the free out-patient departments of neighborhood hospitals. There were noted only four cases involving physical or mental defects.

The boys from this block accepted employment with the same alacrity that they accepted recreation and education. Expecting to be self-supporting, they were eagerly searching for the kinds of work that promised opportunities and promotion. Not many boys desired to follow their fathers' specific occupations, although

many were in the business world or expected to enter it in lines dissimilar to those of their fathers. A number of boys were engaged in after-school and evening part-time work.

Those boys who were employed earned from \$15.00 to \$50.00 a week. There was no evidence that either the working boys or those who were still in school were conscious of any vocational guidance. Those boys who were at work had obtained their jobs through their own initiative, through newspapers, personal canvas, friends, or the family. Employment bureaus were not consulted.

Practically all of the boys received parental supervision. Among the younger boys, supervision of both hours and activities was noted. The tendency was to relinquish supervision as the boys became self-supporting or as they entered high school or college. Among those who were not parentally supervised were those whose mothers were employed.

One of the most pleasant impressions gained during the survey was that of the understanding relationship that existed between the parents and the boys, a relationship that made of supervision not merely a formal series of ordering and forbidding, but which achieved its end through affectionate interest in the children's activities, behavior, choice of friends and amusements.

#### Palm Street—1931

In 1931 the entire Palm Street block, consisting of 592 apartments, had 72 vacancies and 520 occupancies, of which 427 families and household groups were enumerated by nationality and country of origin.

The largest nationality group on the block were Negroes, of which there were 247 families, the majority being American-born, and the remainder primarily from the British West Indies, with a scattering from Spanish-speaking Central and South American countries or from countries of unidentified origin.

On the whole block there were only 79 Spanish American families, the majority of them from Porto Rico. Thus, this block which in 1926 was in transition from Jewish to Spanish American, was, in 1931, in a new process of transition, from Spanish

American to Negro. Fourteen other European and Asiatic nations were represented by scattered elements.

Among 427 families, there were only 122 with boys of survey age, from whom the survey sampling was drawn, and of the remainder, a large number of families were childless. Of the families having boys of survey age there were 63 Negro families, 38 Spanish white families, and 21 of scattering nationalities.<sup>2</sup>

In 1931, Palm Street had deteriorated physically. The streets were less clean; hallways and stairs were shabby. Many of the large seven-room apartments had been cut up into smaller apartments. Every house had "To-let" and "Furnished Room" signs, and the furnished room business flourished.

Small business had crept into private apartments, where families combined business with living quarters in an attempt to eke out an existence.

In 1921 the block had been occupied almost entirely by a wealthy class of Jewish business men. During the period of housing scarcity, caused by lack of new construction between 1921 and 1926, these tenants remained on the block, but were replaced by a less wealthy group of Jews when new apartment construction began in the Bronx.

During this period, rentals were 20 to 25% higher than in 1931. In 1926 the first Porto Rican family moved into the block, and shortly thereafter, the first Negroes. From this point on, rental values dropped and the exodus of Jewish families began.

In 1928, parcels on one side of the block were purchased by a syndicate which planned the creation of a new modern apartment colony similar to that at the Plaza on 59th Street and Fifth Avenue. In 1931 after purchasing property at boom prices, the syndicate went bankrupt and the property reverted to its original owners.

The property was returned in very poor condition, as the syndicate had failed to make repairs, had lowered rentals, and had

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<sup>2</sup>In the survey sampling, the number of Negro and Spanish American families was not in proportion to their numbers in the total block population, the Spanish American families having been given far greater representation in the block sampling. This skewing of the sampling was in part due to the fact that the Negro population of the block had, in proportion, fewer families with boys of survey age than did the other nationalities, including the Spanish American.

left the property largely untenanted. In 1931 the original owners were renovating their buildings and making a fairly successful attempt to re-rent them. The belief among real estate men in 1931 was that the block would remain unchanged for many years to come, and would not deteriorate further.

Rentals in 1931, however, had dropped markedly since 1926. In 1926, rentals ranged from \$40.00 to \$150.00 per month, whereas in 1931 the range was from \$20.00 to \$100.00 per month, with the majority of families paying between \$20.00 and \$60.00 per month. Rentals on this block, even though depreciated, were so high as to definitely stamp the block as being out of the slum class. Rentals were so high in comparison with the incomes of heads of families that, although total family income records were lacking, one may suspect that a disproportionate share of income was being spent for shelter.

Negroes tended to pay higher rentals than other racial groups. The lowest rent paid by Negroes was \$40.00 per month, whereas a considerable proportion of Spanish American families paid between \$20.00 and \$40.00 a month.

Practically every family in the survey sampling lived in a modern apartment having steam heat, hot running water, a private bath and toilet, and electric light. Housing congestion was not severe. Nevertheless, it rose considerably from 1926 to 1931, from 1.09 to 1.22 persons per room. In 1926, 355 persons lived in 325 rooms. In 1931, 354 persons lived in 291 rooms.

In 1931 the household group consisted not only of parents and children but of numerous lodgers and boarders. The majority of the children were below the age of 16, a condition particularly true of the Spanish American families. Racially, the majority of the boys of the sampling were white.

The majority of the parents were born in Central and South American countries, or in Spain. Of those born in the United States, all but one were Negro. The sampling included 37 Spanish and Spanish American families, 23 Negro families, one native white American family, and one white African family.

Slightly more than half of the boys were born in the United States. These were equally divided into Negroes and whites. The remainder were of Spanish American birth, 3 being Negro

and 32 white. The proportion of foreign-born children on this block was unusually high. It is to be noted that the Negro boys were almost entirely of native birth whereas more than two-fifths of the Spanish boys were of foreign birth, indicative of the recency of the Spanish American immigration. The majority of the Spanish boys on the block were young children below the age of ten, whereas the majority of the Negro boys were above the age of ten.

The proportion of broken homes was large; 43% were broken by the death or absence of one or both parents and only 57% were unbroken. The most intact of the families were the white Europeans, and the least intact were the Negro families.

Nationality, or race, and religion were closely correlated among parents. There were no Jews in the 1931 sampling. The white Europeans were all Catholic. The great majority of the Spanish American were Roman Catholic and all but one Negro family were Protestant.

In 1931 two major languages, English and Spanish, were spoken. The average family was bi-lingual; only 18 of 119 parents spoke no English. Only a handful of the parents admitted total illiteracy and more than half of the fathers and nearly one-half of the mothers claimed to read English exclusively. The wide-spread use of English is to be accounted for by the fact that a large portion of the Spanish American residents were of Porto Rican birth and had studied English in the Porto Rican schools under American tutelage.

The mothers showed much less cultural assimilation than the fathers. Thus, those who read foreign languages only were primarily Spanish American mothers.

In general, the great majority of homes were barren of reading material. The most books were found in Negro homes. The range of reading among the Negroes was also better than among the Spanish American families, biography, history and the classics being somewhat more frequently represented.

Only a few of the families possessed telephones, but a surprisingly large number possessed radios. Phonographs and upright pianos were also common.

Contrary to what might be the expectation for a group of

parents living in a fairly good Harlem block, the majority of the fathers were either laborers or semi-skilled workers and very few were merchants or professional men. None were on emergency work relief and only two fathers were unemployed.

Salaries generally showed a marked drop in comparison with 1926. In the earlier year, half of the fathers earned above \$40.00 per week, whereas in 1931 only one parent earned above that amount.

In 1931 slightly better than one-third of the mothers were commercially employed, most of them at various types of sewing.

The full force of the economic depression had not struck this block in 1931. Only five families made direct complaints of economic stress and while a large proportion of the parents were employed either at temporary jobs or working irregularly at reduced incomes, they still managed to carry on their customary pursuits.

The most striking impression given by the residents of this block was their utter lack of a perception of the general economic trend. None seemed to realize that they were in the midst of an economic depression, nor had any of them any concept of the economic ills of the nation. Only one family was receiving public assistance.

An examination of the organization affiliations of Palm Street parents in 1931 revealed a remarkable absence of interest in social activities outside of the home. Approximately only one in four had such affiliations, of which the largest proportion was found among Negroes. There was very little community interest among the Spanish and Spanish American parents. Churches, labor unions, fraternal associations, and political and social clubs were the primary organization interests.

There appeared to be several reasons for this lack of community participation. Many of the families were comparatively recent immigrants and appeared to have been engrossed in the physical task of earning a livelihood. Again, racial conflict between Porto Ricans and Negroes appeared to have been a deterrent factor in community organization. Jealousies among the various Spanish nationalities, based on concepts of status, were clearly important as a disintegrating social force. Their mobility



was great; thus, the majority of the Spanish American families had lived less than one year on the block.

A tabulation of attitudes toward the block showed the Spanish and Spanish American families to be more often dissatisfied than satisfied and the Negroes to be more often satisfied than dissatisfied. Only 35% of the Spanish attitudes were favorable, where 66% of the Negro attitudes were favorable. The Negroes were an ascending group in this block, replacing Spanish Americans, it is to be noted. Only a small minority of all comments dealt with the advantages or disadvantages of the block for children. Those stated by the Negro parents stressed the advantages of the block for children whereas those stated by Spanish Americans emphasized the disadvantages.

Throughout the attitudes expressed, the factor of racial conflict was present and provided an emotional basis for many expressions of attitude dealing with social inadequacies and lack of status.

Theft, sex assault, prostitution and gambling were the chief offenses of the residents of the block. Variations in the number of arrests were apparently dependent upon the degree of police activity in the suppression of gambling and prostitution. In 1931 there was an inexplicable absence of arrests for violation of the National Prohibition Act.

Because of the youth of most of the boys, it was difficult to determine the educational standards of the block. Not a single boy was attending either college or university and only three were attending high school voluntarily, the remainder of the instruction being compulsory, as required by the education law. All of the children attended public schools, 35 in elementary, 4 in junior high, and 5 in general high schools.

Among the boys beyond school age, the majority had gone no higher than elementary school. Many of the children still in school had educational and vocational ambitions, however.

A significant aspect of the school status of the children in this block was the excessive degree of retardation. Among a group of children on whom school reports were available, 3 of 45 boys were at grade and 42 were retarded from one to 9 terms. There were no accelerations. Retardations were evenly distributed

throughout all school grades. The even distribution of frequency of retardation leads to the belief that low mentality was not the major factor in retardation in this block, and that recency of immigration and its attendant linguistic problems was the basis for excessive retardation.

Most of the children were relatively regular in their school attendance; those below the age of ten, however, were less regular than those between the ages of 10 and 14 years. Only a small sampling of the boys expressed their attitudes toward school and these were almost equally divided into favorable and unfavorable.

The strong hold of the church was seen in the number of children receiving systematic religious instruction both in Catholic and Protestant churches. Religious instruction was strikingly great among the children of Spanish American parents.

Cultural education was indicated in a considerable number of instances; 14 boys received music instruction and 5 received language instruction.

In 1931, 16 boys of working age were employed and 3 were idle. Few had entered skilled trades and most of them were in dead-end jobs which had no especial future and whose tenure was probably of short duration. This was in spite of the fact that most of the boys had obtained some previous form of trade experience either on the job or in school.

The majority earned between \$10.00 and \$19.00 a week. Most of them obtained their employment through relatives, friends and acquaintances. About one-third used public and private employment agencies and want ads.

The lives of these boys were touched by supervised recreation in only a small proportion of instances. Only about one out of every five boys was a member of a recreation center. This proportion, however, was probably equal to the average for the city as a whole.

The surrounding neighborhood was deficient in indoor supervised recreational facilities. There was neither a boys' club, settlement house, or neighborhood center within walking distance of the block and, at the time of survey, very little use was being made of public school recreational facilities.

Those boys on the block who participated in supervised recrea-

tion either traveled a considerable distance or were affiliated with recreational activities in high school. The one exception to this was the availability of recreational facilities at several neighborhood Spanish churches.

There was a considerable degree of outdoor unsupervised recreation, the majority of the boys having played in near-by Central Park. Half of the boys also played in the street. Play in the home engrossed practically a third of the boys.

Certain interesting differences were seen among the different nationality groups. The Negro boys appeared to have been most deficient in voluntary group activities. Very few were reported as being members either of self-organized groups or of supervised recreation centers. This inadequate expression in supervised play life was probably very largely due to the lack of recreational facilities in this neighborhood for the Negro race, and to the social hindrances that were put in the way of Negro participation in community programs intended primarily for other racial groups.

The few white American boys left in the community in 1931 had no supervised recreational affiliations. The Spanish American boys had little supervised recreation, but the majority were too young to have participated. The outstanding recreational organizations appealing to boys were the Boy Scout movement and the Y. M. C. A.

There were very few self-organized independent boys' clubs reported. This was probably a result of the mobility of this block population, as a self-organized boys' club is normally an outgrowth of several years of play association or gang participation. There appeared to be as few evidences of gang activity on this block as of independent club activity.

Block observations of play indicated that the majority of children had not learned to play complex competitive games. The majority played simple games or loitered, rough-housed, and gossipped.

Among 160 children observed on the street, 11 were occupied in highly organized play activities, 44 in activities of a low degree of organization, 75 were occupied in unorganized play, and 30 were either leaving or entering the block. The greatest

amount of highly organized play was among children between the ages of 12 and 15 years.

The majority of the children played with children of their own racial group. The greatest amount of racial mingling took place among the children between the ages of 12 and 15 years.

Commercial recreations claimed a large attendance. More than half of the boys attended motion picture theatres and a small fraction attended other commercial recreations such as legitimate theatres, prize fights, and vaudeville. Only a handful reported dance hall and pool room attendance.

Attendance at commercial recreations involved traveling away from the block, as there was no licensed commercial amusement on the block save one dance hall, which was not frequented by any of the boys who were visited in the survey, and which was looked upon by most of them with some degree of suspicion and fear because of its unsavory reputation.

During the summer, swimming was a favorite sport, particularly among the Spanish American boys. Only a small group enjoyed the privileges of summer camp or extended country visits, and of those who had that privilege, the majority were Spanish American boys.

In 1931 the great majority of children were reported as being supervised both for hours and activities. Below the age of 14, practically all children were said to be under parental restriction. Above the age of 14, however, there was a considerable increase in freedom of movement.

The indication was that the parents were more concerned with the hours the children kept than with their activities. Among 92 boys, 70 were supervised as to their hours of coming and going and only 55 were supervised with regard to their activities.

CHAPTER SIX

CHANGING THE CULTURE PATTERN  
OF THE SLUM

**T**HIS STUDY, intended by its projectors to result in a program of more effective social welfare for the children of these and tens of thousands of similarly situated families, was undertaken to analyze the social patterns of slum life in a minute, detailed way, for the purpose of laying out areas of greatest social maladjustment within which social welfare efforts might be expended. It was hoped that the survey would result in a sort of blue-print of immediate objectives of social assistance to under-privileged childhood.

The study, however, instead of resulting in a schematic program of child welfare assistance, has led to a deeper insight into the cultural aspects of family life in the slum. The slum, as seen in these pages, is not only a grimy mass of brick and mortar that can be torn down and demolished; it is also a way of living—a whole series of habits, attitudes, and sentiments fixed within a mold of social organization and held together by the cement of economic adversity. The slum is imprinted in the minds of those who occupy it, both adults and children.

The basic problems in slum clearance are economic and cultural. The economic aspect of the problem cannot be dealt with within the limits of this study. It can only be pointed out that families do not willingly move into slums, but do so rather from lack of economic power to purchase better housing. Obviously, they must obtain increased purchasing power, either through their own efforts in labor organizations, through a program of building of low-priced model housing, or through both.

But the achievement of better physical surroundings by a fraction of slum dwellers is no solution of the cultural problems of the slum. Even for those who may achieve better housing,

but particularly for those who must remain in the dilapidated housing of the slum, if the re-housing program in the United States is not sped up, the need of cultural rehabilitation is imperative. The growth of a social class who are content with inferior housing, inferior living standards and inferior ethical control over the younger generation constitutes a menace to urban community life. The political enslavement of slum populations by corrupt political machines and the excessive contributions of slum areas to juvenile delinquency and crime, constitute social problems of the first magnitude.

The cultural rehabilitation of the slum is therefore a necessary next objective, accompanying the task of slum clearance. Even should slum clearance be achieved to an extent beyond the expectations of its most ardent supporters, the next generation at least, must see efforts devoted to the cultural re-education of the victims of this generation's slums.

This chapter will consider the problems inherent in an attempt to change the culture patterns of the slum, and the social instrumentalities through which this change may be accomplished.

### The Transition From Philanthropy to Social Security

In 1925, when this study was initiated, the assistance to under-privileged childhood by private, and particularly by philanthropic agencies, was uppermost in the minds of the initiators of the study. There was a genuine desire to assist the under-privileged child in terms of the limited objectives of an individualistic philanthropy. The objectives were in terms of the amelioration of the worst consequences of economic and social under-privilege, not in terms of the removal of the causes of any of these conditions. Thus there was emphasis on such solutions as the increased provision of supervised recreation as compensation for the inadequacy of parental guidance.

However, in 1937, the press of events occasioned by the economic depression has caused to be discarded as inadequate the formula of aid to the under-privileged primarily through institutions of philanthropy and private social welfare. The role of the private agency is steadily being reduced in proportion to the

increased vision of the extent to which the under-privileged must be helped in order that they may achieve their human rights. The job is being seen as one too huge for private resources, and as one which belongs in the area of government to effect, not alone because of its size, but because of the claims of the under-privileged upon government for social security. Today, the trend is toward the extension of the use of public social services to aid the under-privileged to receive their minimum human rights, instead of merely humanitarian assistance.

It may be of interest to trace some of the steps in that amazing metamorphosis in welfare philosophy between 1925 and 1937, which led to a substitution of public programs of social security for private programs of charity.<sup>1</sup>

The onset of the depression gradually began to weaken the underpinnings of the social and economic philosophy of *laissez faire*. The gradual engulfment of large sections of hitherto employed workers, of skilled mechanics as well as laborers; the bankruptcy of a large portion of the petty merchants and small farmers, and the staggering losses to speculative holders of securities and real estate, over-rode as would a tidal wave, the smug conception that success was an individual matter, and failure a form of dishonor. It began to be borne in upon the nation that personal integrity and effort, plus technical skill or professional training, were no match for adverse economic forces. It came to be recognized that conservation of the urge to work and create lay not through the formulae of auto-suggestion, but in the provision of means of collective social security to protect

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<sup>1</sup>In eliminating philanthropy from an important role in the realization of social security, it is necessary to remind ourselves that for several decades the field of private philanthropy served as a testing ground for relief programs. In the United States, until recently, much of the most effective social experimentation in the fields of public health, family welfare, recreation and community organization, child guidance and protection, care of the physically and mentally handicapped, of the indigent and aged, etc., had been under private auspices. Philanthropy has set standards for and provided demonstrations of social welfare services which have been adopted by public agencies to the advantage of the entire community. The field of professional social service developed its major techniques, such as the case method, under philanthropic sponsorship. Areas of research and experimentation are still existent in which privately operated services can be effective, until public agencies become equipped to engage therein.

great masses of persons against the consequences of the depression phase of the business cycle.

The formulae of philanthropy were inadequate to meet this new conception. Both in its principles and application, philanthropy was a denial of the conceptions of collective social security. The essence of philanthropy was to provide as benefaction a portion of those services which more economically secure groups might purchase through their earning power. Philanthropy never balances the pay envelope. When the depression, at its peak, threw one-sixth to one-fifth of the nation's population upon the mercy of relief, philanthropy had to be supplanted by public emergency relief, for purely financial reasons, since philanthropy, despite its drives for funds, found itself unable to cope through its limited fund-raising machinery with the appalling extent of need.

But the replacement of philanthropy by public relief represented more than a substitution of a strong for a weak fund-raising agency. It represented tacit acceptance of a new social philosophy, that collective social security was a social right. The establishment of that policy, even in rudimentary form, was perhaps as significant as any political rights granted to our people through the guarantees of our Constitution.

The rights of health and of treatment for illness, of roomy homes and comfortable furnishings, leisure and the means for its enjoyment, adequate maternity care and child guidance, insurance against illness, unemployment and old age—these rights which have not been obtainable for all persons in our individualistic society, either through purchasing power or philanthropy, are now being sought for all persons through a public program of collective social security.

There is increasing mass pressure for the enactment of measures of social security that will achieve the realization of these rights. This pressure is today, under our very eyes, splitting wide open the traditional political organizations and political allegiances, and forming new political alliances of groups having social security as a common goal. The fact needs no labored argument, for the trend is so clear that he who runs may read.

Today, in 1937, we are therefore not oriented toward piece-



meal aid to the underprivileged through philanthropy, and are instead looking toward the development of a broad program of public social security. The extension of the rights of social security to groups hitherto denied them obviously calls for the development and extension of social machinery for their realization.

Governmental planning has so far been utilized primarily for experimentation with the economic, aspects of social security. The control of production, price and wages undertaken under NRA; the control of agricultural production and prices under AAA; the long-range program of public works under PWA; the unified system of Federal emergency relief under CWA, FERA and WPA; the control of flood and production of electric current under TVA—all these are primarily economic forms of planning.<sup>2</sup>

However, the trend of government is increasingly toward planning for the nation, not merely as producers and consumers, but as differentiated groups with specific types of insecurity. The trend from consideration of our population in the mass, to consideration of them in groups is the first step in the process of individualization of public social welfare. Thus, the Social Security Act, with its programs for old age, dependent children, the handicapped, and the unemployed, is a step in the direction of individualization. The individual still, to an extent, remains as a dot on a graph, or a digit in a statistical total, but he has been categorized within an appropriate sub-group.

Beyond the broad ranges of purely economic social security, there remains a wide area, comprising cultural objectives—educational, vocational and leisure-time, for which there has been, so far, no social planning, and no provision of adequate social machinery for their realization. It is with these latter forms of social implementation that this volume is primarily concerned. It is within this area that are to be faced the more difficult problems of individualization of programs of social welfare. The ques-

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<sup>2</sup>NRA is the abbreviation for National Recovery Administration, AAA for Agricultural Adjustment Administration, PWA for Public Works Administration, WPA for Works Progress Administration, and TVA for Tennessee Valley Authority.

tion therefore is, what are the steps that public agencies must take to establish on a broader base those cultural services to the underprivileged that philanthropic agencies have previously undertaken on a limited scale?

Prior to a consideration of this question it may be of value to review the relationship to the basic cultural needs of the underprivileged of the programs of social institutions operating in the slums, as indicated in the sampling of families surveyed for this volume.

### Status of the Under-privileged

Life, as seen from the study of a cross-section of slum families, has none of the pleasant aspects envisaged by a generation of city planners, housing experts, social insurance proponents and welfare workers. Most of these families have led a treadmill existence consisting mainly of work, sleep, feeding and breeding. Neither prosperity nor depression has affected to any significant degree their opportunities or hopes. There was more suffering and privation during the depression years, 1931-32 than during the prosperity year 1926, but in neither survey period was there any evidence that the environment into which they had been thrust was either creating desires for a fuller life or was affording the means for development of the full potential of their cultural capacities.

There was no effective educational relationship between these families and the social institutions serving them. The church appeared as a thread woven through their lives but there was little indication of its influence on conduct, and adherence to the church appeared to be largely ceremonial and traditional in significance. The lay institutions having most meaning to these families were benevolent and protective orders, labor unions and local political clubs, institutions which afforded some form of protection against economic insecurity.

Private social agencies had contact with only a limited number of these families and these were affected in no vital way by the contact. The visiting nurse, the settlement house group leader, the visiting teacher, were only names to the majority of families

surveyed. The school teacher was a more vivid entity, but hardly better known.

The public services, while having continual contact with these families, appear not to have been potent agencies in directing their habits, attitudes, vocational goals, or leisure-time interests. The police and courts, departments of health and sanitation, had for the most part, only impersonal relationships in these areas. There was no single point of leverage by which any of the public services, operating in its conventional way, effected important and lasting cultural change.<sup>3</sup>

The extension of public welfare services for the cultural rehabilitation of the slums implies not only a process of individualization, but also one of collective planning within the area of the local community.

### Collective Social Planning for Slum Rehabilitation

Collective planning implies cooperative instead of un-integrated and even competitive activity, among the social institutions operating in a community. In the primitive, face-to-face community, there was little need of special machinery for social planning, as a consensus of opinion could be achieved among a roomful of leaders, or in open town meeting. But in the modern city, there is neither widespread recognition of a need for collective planning nor the social machinery for achieving it. The drive for power and privilege of individuals and of the groups they represent, has created huge, institutional activities that operate without a view of, attention to, or interest in the problems of the community as a whole.

In a city such as New York, the multiplicity of social groups,

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<sup>3</sup> It may be asked whether or not there must be a theory of progress underlying public welfare services in a democracy. Implicit, and hazy, such a theory exists, worded perhaps in such abstract terms as "the greatest good for the greatest number," but in a practical way, social change on behalf of the poor needs no theory of progress to guide it. The underprivileged will seek to enjoy the same type of rights, privileges and possessions as has been enjoyed by classes with greater purchasing power. Thus the dominant culture of the community will necessarily serve as the standard of achievement among the underprivileged.

operating more or less without knowledge of the other, is both fantastic and staggering. Public departments, with their innumerable bureaus and offices; thousands of industrial corporations and businesses; hundreds of public and parochial schools; hundreds of churches; thousands of benevolent and protective associations, political clubs, labor unions, parents' organizations; hundreds of welfare agencies; thousands of commercial recreations; dozens of community centers; conduct their daily affairs in serene disregard of the other.

The result has been that the development of the city has been haphazard, responding to the pressures of organized groups, rather than in accord with any comprehensive plan. Examples of unplanned development might be drawn from a variety of sources, from unzoned building development, competing transportation franchises, mis-location of playgrounds, duplication of public offices on a borough basis, duplication of social welfare services, duplication of delinquency prevention agencies.

In addition to duplications of service, and unnecessary competition, there has been in many fields, inadequate survey and distribution of effort, as well as disregard of the trend of population.

Recent efforts at collective planning within restricted activity areas are indications of an awakening recognition of the inefficiencies of rugged individualism in a complex social structure. Efforts in New York City of the Regional Planning Board to create a comprehensive, consistent plan for the development of the metropolitan area, with reference to location of industrial areas, areas of housing, transportation arteries, parks and playground, etc.; efforts of the Welfare Council to integrate the activities of over fifteen hundred independent private social agencies; attempts through charter revision to consolidate city bureaus; are but several of a number of recent evidences of the trend to group planning. It is to be noted that much of the pioneering in this field has been among social institutions rendering a like type of service, or those whose fields are tangent to one another, as the courts and police, health and education, etc.

There has been little progress in urban communities in achieving the type of collective action which involves comprehensive

action among groups of social institutions representing diverse services not ordinarily considered tangent to one another. The need for such collective action for social welfare purposes has given rise in the last several years to an interesting country-wide phenomenon, the community coordinating council. In hundreds of smaller communities throughout the United States, as well as in several large cities, coordinating councils, representing public departments, private agencies, and civic groups, have been formed to mould community opinion into some type of consensus toward the solution of problem situations. Although the initial interest in coordination in most communities has been on the part of those interested in but one phase of community life, namely the prevention of delinquency, the trend, probably because of the complex character of the environmental forces affecting childhood behavior, has been away from emphasis upon a single childhood problem, and toward concern with the broader aspects of child welfare. The current formula in many communities calls for fact-finding, coordination of programs, development of new services, and application of guidance principles in the cases of under-privileged children who have been overlooked by service agencies. Coordinating councils usually function through an environment, an adjustment and a service committee. The environment committee is concerned with inquiry into home and community conditions inimical to child welfare; the adjustment committee, usually consisting of professional social workers, refers to appropriate service agencies the cases of children in need of follow-up; and the service committee deals with the questions of coordination and extension of services.

It is too early to appraise the effectiveness of the coordinating committee movement, in dealing with such complex urban social problems as are described in this volume. The coordinating committee is primarily not a philosophy, or a facility, but an administrative procedure and mechanism. Its strength is dependent upon the level of collective thinking of the community itself. In dealing with the problems of underprivileged childhood, it is subject to the limitations of the social philosophies of its member institutions and their sponsors. If child welfare is

viewed still from the stand-point of charity, if adequate child welfare services do not exist, and if professional standards of service are lacking, then the mechanism may not prove to be more effective than the social philosophy behind it.

Where the coordinating movement has been most effective, it has been because of sponsorship by an important public department. Coordinating movements have been least effective when their membership has included only private social agencies and civic groups. A major question in undertaking community coordination for child welfare is in determining which public department or departments can be most effective in promoting the movement.<sup>4</sup> This question shall be dealt with later in this chapter. The coordinating movement has not yet been applied to the problem of slum rehabilitation. Its application in this field would involve a re-orientation of its point of view to give greater emphasis to educational objectives. This may require an explanation.

As seen from the findings of this study, the slum is not merely an area of deteriorated housing, but is an area of cultural lag. Its living standards are below the level of those of the surrounding, more economically favored areas. Even a cursory reading of this volume will discover customs, attitudes, beliefs and habits of daily life that differentiate these slum dwellers from more favored culture groups. These inferior cultural patterns are transmitted to the children of the slums through family life. They inherit inadequate health habits, a meager capacity for linguistic expression, narrow reading interests, a humdrum or

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<sup>4</sup>In New York City, the first steps toward community coordination were undertaken in local under-privileged areas by neighborhood councils of social agencies, comprising the private family welfare, child guidance, child protection, and recreational services rendered to the neighborhood by philanthropic agencies. The restricted nature of their membership and their lack of power and status has led to consideration of the formation of a coordinating movement on a broader membership base. During 1936 and 1937, a committee on coordination, appointed by the Mayor, and consisting of high ranking officials of city departments concerned with child welfare—education, health, public welfare, parks and playgrounds, police, etc., has considered ways and means of coordination, both on a neighborhood and metropolitan basis, of the child welfare resources of the city, as represented in public departments and private social agencies.

fantastic vision of life employment, ignorance of standards of well-bred conduct. They are stamped indelibly by their background and handicapped in school, office, or institution of higher learning. If they possess actual ability, it is often un-recognized, or if recognized, undeveloped, through lack of funds or of influence.

The rehabilitation of the children of the slum, therefore, involves more than collective planning for better types of child welfare services—it involves the creation of a more effective educational procedure for affecting the culture pattern of slum living.<sup>5</sup>

Which social institution is most favorably situated to assume leadership in raising the cultural status of the underprivileged; of giving them access to the conceptions of modern, urban society; re-moulding their daily habits in terms of modern health and hygiene; guiding their vocational training in terms of existing opportunities; guiding their spare-time pursuits in directions of creative self-expression? Is it the police, or the courts, the departments of sanitation and health, the parks and playgrounds, the churches, the social welfare agencies, the settlement houses, the labor unions, the political clubs, the benevolent and protective associations?

Sober reflection compels the reply that in their day to day functioning, as revealed in the pages of this volume, none of these agencies is assuming the leadership necessary to produce a renaissance of culture among the slum population of this American city.

The one social institution functioning in the slums which possesses the basic relationships for establishing cultural leadership, is already, in New York itself, passing through a renaissance which is converting its latent possibilities into realities. That

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<sup>5</sup>The slum is not a static society and is constantly in process of change. The introduction of new patterns of behavior through schools and social agencies is counterbalanced by a loss in leadership due to removal of families possessing ambition and higher cultural standards. The result is that the slum, as demonstrated by the writer, in previous studies, becomes progressively culturally impoverished, through an excess concentration of individuals of inadequate intelligence. See *Problem Boys and Their Non-Problem Brothers*, by Harry M. Shulman, New York State Crime Commission, 1929, pp. 210-216.

institution is the public school system. The school system of New York, one of the largest in the world, possessing a teaching staff of over 30,000 and an attendance of over one million, two hundred thousand pupils, is the single social institution possessing all the latent possibilities of producing cultural rehabilitation among the children of the slums, within the limitations of their economic opportunities, in a competitive system.

It is the only social institution having access to the child and his parents, having trained leadership and having extensive physical equipment. It is in touch with the child and his parents a minimum of five days a week, 42 weeks a year, from the sixth to the sixteenth year, and in many instances, prior to and beyond those years. It has a tradition of training for its leaders and is rapidly expanding the ranks of its specialists in non-academic education. It has a physical plant equalled by none in size and extent of facilities. Public schools are to be found in every underprivileged area. Compared to the vastness and inclusiveness of this social institution, all others have but an auxiliary or tangential interest in the rearing of the slum child. It is therefore the public school system toward which we must look for leadership in community organization for the educational rehabilitation of the slums.

The school system, in New York, is showing increasing awareness of its responsibilities in the field of community life, and is extending its influence beyond its walls, at the same time that it is moving toward an individualization of the intra-mural educational process, both through the substitution of activity programs in the place of academic instruction, and through child guidance and vocational counseling. Its increasing experience in both directions fits the school system for leadership in underprivileged areas. The author does not feel, therefore, that he is expressing a strange, unique, or novel thought in urging the logical extension of the present trends of that institution; he is merely anticipating by a small time period what has been a gradually developing conception of the role of the public school in slum rehabilitation.

No one who is in touch with the policies of the New York City school system, or who has consistently followed its changes



from year to year, can fail to be impressed with the trend toward acceptance of responsibility for community leadership. Thus, in the 1936 Annual Report, Associate Superintendent Stephen Bayne, in charge of elementary schools, stated:

No matter what the causes, greater and greater responsibility for child care has been thrust upon the schools of 1937. The head of a great educational institution has but recently inveighed strongly against this tendency. He urged the schools to throw off these added responsibilities on other agencies—the home, the church, the library, the social institution. If this were done, unless the home were all that it should be, it would be necessary to appeal to some similar coordinating influence existing, and until these agencies are attuned and coordinated, the school must carry on its attempts to bring the influence of all these agencies to bear on the child. To this end, the Elementary division has repeatedly urged the full utilization of community forces and educational possibilities that the child may feel that the school is a vital part of the community.<sup>6</sup>

The awareness, here and there in the school system, of the necessity of a leadership role in community life is well illustrated by the description, in the last annual Board of Education report, of an experiment already under way in an underprivileged area, of adapting the school curriculum and procedures to the needs of that area. The report states that it is planned to afford the children in this area opportunity for growth to the fullest educational stature of which they are capable. Field studies were conducted to determine the occupations, economic resources, housing conditions and leisure-time activities of the area. The culture patterns, social influences and educational backgrounds of adults were analyzed. Sociological vital indices were collected. The school population was studied in terms of intellectual capacity, physical condition, social status, emotional stability, educational standing, interests and experiences.

A retraining program was conducted for supervisors and teachers. An activity program was introduced. Slow and immature children were allowed to shoulder responsibilities. Special abilities were given attention. Clubs were set up to serve varied in-

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<sup>6</sup> Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, New York City Board of Education, 1936, p. 17.

terests and bring out latent talents. The curriculum was broadened to include trips and excursions. An effort was made to co-ordinate the functioning of such community services as hospitals, clinics, churches, relief organizations and city departments with the endeavors of the school to provide help for its children.

A social planning committee was organized with representatives of the Parents' Associations, teaching personnel, citizens and social agencies. The committee has sponsored an adult education program, new discussion and culture groups, increased welfare services, civic planning, neighborhood entertainment, organization of new recreational facilities and provision of staff for their operation, planning for assistance to the area by other city departments, provision of a new health center, and of afternoon and evening community centers, provision of a new evening school, and finally, development of a public opinion which is beginning to affect environmental influences demoralizing to childhood.<sup>7</sup>

### The School Role in Community Leadership

Many persons feel that the school system has achieved its community goal when its playgrounds are open evenings and on school holidays; when after-school and evening community centers under competent leadership, are operated for the children of the neighborhood; and when club and assembly rooms are made available for community use. The description of an experimental area program of school leadership in community organization, given in the preceding paragraphs, gives a vista of the actual range of problems that must be faced in a program of rehabilitation of the urban slum.

Involved in this transition from the mere provision of increased community facilities in the shape of playgrounds and club rooms, to undertaking of active leadership for community cultural guidance, is a shift in conception of the function of the public school. The traditional conception was that the school

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 37-9.

was an instrument for the transmission of knowledge, and the training of skills. The progressive educators changed that conception to include the building of socialized personalities through the socialization of the teaching method. Now the sociologists urge a further extension of the conception to include the building of new community culture patterns within which the school child, upon leaving school, may find re-enforcement of the influences to which he has been subjected in his school hours.

This latter conception would make the school system, not just a department store of community services, but a foster-parent that accepted the responsibility of helping the child's own parents to carry on his rearing in all important aspects, save worship. The school would stand toward the normal children of the underprivileged, in the same position as does the Domestic Relations Court for that group of children who through delinquency or neglect, have become its wards. This point of view does not contemplate that the school system should be invested with additional powers of arbitrary authority. Its present powers are, with few exceptions, adequate for fulfillment of its proposed new role. One outstanding exception is its lack of power over the delinquent child of school age, over whom it would seem the school ought to have original jurisdiction to treat through educational and psychiatric procedures; with the Children's Court standing as a referral agency for the more formal supervision of school children who have failed to respond to social treatment.

The adoption of an active role in child-rearing should not cause the school to infringe upon the rights of the parent. The extension of opportunities by the school for the betterment of childhood need not involve conflict, if the welfare services of the school are operated on a sound case-work basis. In London, through care committees, the schools have carried on for decades, rudimentary social services to its underprivileged children, in the form of home follow-up of school medical examinations, parental education for health and hygiene, summer camp care and lay vocational counseling, without creation of friction between parents and authorities. In New York City, during the recent depression, the school system provided daily meals to

nearly one hundred thousand school children, in order that these children might be properly nourished for the strain of school attendance, without public outcry of indignation, at the usurping of the family role. Yet the latter program far exceeded in scope the proposed new function of the school in normal times, which is not to supplant the parent, or do for the child those things that are the duty of the parent, merely as a parent surrogate, but to act as a guide to the parent.

There is a vast difference between the two positions. Visualizing the school as a substitute for the home is one goal. Seeking its powerful aid in overcoming the inadequacies of the modern urban slum home, is quite a different goal. The latter aim, in its most fundamental aspect, would require that the school assume a teaching role toward the parent as well as toward the child. This does not imply that there should be compulsory education for adults as well as for children, although that is a not inconceivable possibility in the near future, but that the school shall establish such contacts with parents that willing and friendly parental assent shall be given to school efforts to achieve health, vocational competence, strong cultural interests and socially co-operative experience, among the children of the neighborhood.

The suggestion of this school role presumes that the school personnel are skilled in those arts which involve the total rearing of the child—health education, habit training, treatment of behavior disorders, recreation guidance, home economics and dietetics, etc. Such an assumption would be unfortunate. School personnel, as a whole, are not skilled in these arts beyond their experience as intelligent laymen. Professional training in these fields is afforded to only a handful of teachers in the elementary schools. Before the school system could become a teacher to parents, it would have to extend its own knowledge of the art of child rearing, through the inclusion of these fields of knowledge in the curriculum both of the teacher in training and the alertness courses of the practicing teacher, and through the extension of the staff of school specialists to include, in adequate numbers, such experts as dieticians, pediatricians, dentists, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric case workers, vocational

counselors, recreational directors, artists, dramatists, writers, musicians.

Such a program would probably more than double the costs of education. For in addition to expanding the special service divisions of the school personnel, it would involve a greater individualization of education for the normal child. It is obvious that the school system cannot be urged to extend its role to include guidance of the slum family, without having the facilities to undertake individualized guidance of the slum child both in school as well as out of school. But individualization of instruction, and the application of the activity program cannot be undertaken effectively with average school class registers of nearly forty pupils, and with large numbers of classes including from forty to fifty pupils. Therefore, the need would be to accelerate markedly the existing trend toward smaller classes. This would involve a large increase in the number of classes and in the size of the teaching personnel, and might even require the extension of school building facilities in slums, despite the tendency to school population decreases in slum areas. Such a trend, initiated in the slums, would probably be likewise demanded, and forthcoming, in population areas of better economic status.

The claim may be made that such a conception as has been outlined, is fantastic, since existing budgetary appropriations for public education are not on a scale adequate to meet the demands of a school program of community organization. This is true, but need not remain true. If communities could be stirred over their educational needs by the same skillful type of propaganda as stimulates communities and nations into making tremendous outlays for war materials; if patriotic bond issues for school expansion could be floated, similar to those floated for national armament, our educational budgets could be expanded to the extent necessary to carry out the type of program visualized in this chapter.

## Relation Between Re-education and Slum Clearance

It is evident from the findings of this volume that the majority of the families studied herein lived in sub-standard dwellings and suffered physical and social deprivations as a result. Housing congestion denied parents and growing boys and girls the right of individual privacy, and hampered the struggle of parents to instill high living standards in their children. Training in personal hygiene was hampered by a lack of bathing and sanitary facilities. Development of a sense of æsthetics was frustrated by the physical sordidness of the surroundings. The crushing effect of a low-level physical environment was mirrored in the stunted personality development of adults and children.

Slum housing, likewise, struck at the social function of the family. Ample home space was lacking for the development of normal social relationships between parents and children, and among children. There was no space for play, for social visiting of children's friends, no parlor for the visit of boy friends, no place for courtship. As a result, children were driven to the street for play, companionship and romantic experience, and the family lost its age-old heritage of control and guidance over these all-important steps in child development.

It is obvious that a program of cultural re-education of slum families calls for a concomitant governmental program of slum clearance, and of erection of model housing within the rental range of families such as have been studied in this volume. The hampering influence of slum housing would do much to nullify the effects of a rich cultural program in the public schools. Conversely, a model housing program that ignored the present habit-patterns of slum dwellers, and that expected an over-night transformation in personalities, habits, customs and beliefs, without the intervention of a painfully slow re-educational process would be rightfully deemed Quixotic. Both programs are inter-linked and inter-dependent. If emphasis has been placed in this volume upon the re-educational aspect of slum rehabilitation it is because the author has felt that somehow this tremendous phase of social welfare has been over-shadowed in consideration of plans for physical slum clearance.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
TYLER STREET

The Slum Cycle

TYLER STREET, on the Lower East Side of New York, lies in the westward, most deteriorated portion of that slum. Located only a few minutes' walk from the commercial and financial center of the city, Tyler Street is an example of a housing area whose downfall has been encompassed by an increase in land values. Tyler Street has gone through the typical economic cycle of the slum—increase in land values, increased taxation, speculative re-sale of tenements, reduction of rental incomes, reduction in repairs and renovations, increased physical deterioration, increased apartment vacancies, loss of population.

Tyler Street landlords, in common with other slum owners, made feverish efforts to stem the tide of population loss, by minor improvements, such as provision of hot water, and in a few instances, bathtubs, but the trend was not stopped. Absentee landlordism, speculative in type, (many tenements have had from twenty to thirty successive owners of record) was unable to cope with economic forces, and Tyler Street marched inexorably toward its doom as a slum. Today, it is standing half in the past, half in the future. One part has been torn down and on its site stand the buildings of Knickerbocker Village, a garden community of expensive elevator apartment houses. The other half faces demolition when the construction up-turn in the housing industry will take place.

From 1926 to 1931, the block population dropped approximately from 2,500 to 1,400, and in the families containing boys, from 1,339 to 997, or 25%. The number of families dropped from 635 to 359 and families with boys from 248 to 179. Boy population likewise dropped 25%, from 516 to 375. There was a

tendency for families with very young children to move out of the block, as represented in a 33% loss of boys under sixteen years, off-set by an 8% increase in boys over sixteen, the latter representing normal age increases during the two survey years. The age groupings were for the 2 survey years (1926 given first); under 4, 92 or 18%, 21 or 6%; 4-5, 49 or 10%; 38 or 10%; 6-9, 109 or 21%; 94 or 25%; 10-14, 148 or 28%; 127 or 34%; 15-17, 56 or 11%, 49 or 13%; 18 and over, 62 or 12%; 46 or 12%; Totals, 516-375.

### Housing

Were it not for its type of housing, the East Side would not be the slum problem it is today. Therefore, a discussion of Tyler Street must center around the factor of housing. Housing conditions in Tyler Street, as in the East Side in general, have grown worse rather than better throughout the last seventy-five years. Such evils as cellar dwellings and lack of modern plumbing have been corrected to some degree, but the conditions which seemed most serious to the first Housing Commission, in 1856—lack of light and ventilation, insufficient protection against fire and filth—have been intensified by the type of tenements now occupying the block.

De Forest and Veiller, more than a quarter of a century ago, gave a classical description of a Tyler Street tenement house that is, save for minor changes, as accurate today as it was then.

It is a building usually five or six or even seven stories high, about twenty-five feet wide, and built upon a lot of land of the same width and about 100 feet deep. The building as a rule extends back 90 feet leaving the small space of ten feet unoccupied at the rear, so that the back rooms may obtain some light and air. This space has continued to be left open only because the law has compelled it. Upon the entrance floor there are generally two stores, one on each side of the building, and these sometimes have two or three living rooms back of them. In the center is the entrance hall-way, a long corridor less than three feet wide, and extending back sixty feet in length. This hallway is nearly always dark, receiving no light except that from the street door and a faint light that comes from small windows opening upon the stairs, which are placed at one side



of the hall-way. Each floor above is generally divided into four sets of apartments, there being seven rooms on each side of the hall, extending back from the street, to the rear of the building. The front apartments generally consist of four rooms each and the rear apartments of three rooms, making altogether fourteen rooms upon each floor, or in a seven-story house, eighty-four rooms exclusive of the stores and rooms back of them. Of these fourteen rooms on each floor, only four receive direct light and air from the street or from the small yard at the back of the building. Generally, along each side of the building is what is termed an "air shaft," being an indentation of the wall to a depth of about 28 inches, and extending in length for a space of from 50 to 60 feet. This shaft is entirely enclosed on four sides, and is, of course, the full height of the building, often from 60 to 72 feet high. The ostensible purpose of the shaft is to provide light and air to the five rooms on each side of the house which get no direct light and air from the street or yard; but as the shafts are narrow and high, being enclosed on all four sides, and without any intake of air at the bottom, these rooms obtain, instead of fresh air and sunshine, foul air and semi-darkness. . . .

Of these four (front) rooms only two are large enough to be deserving of the name of rooms. The front one is generally about 10 feet 6 inches wide by eleven feet, three inches long; this the family use as a parlour, and often at night, when the small bedrooms opening on the air-shaft are so close and ill-ventilated<sup>1</sup> that sleep is impossible, mattresses are dragged on the floor of the parlour and there the family sleep, all together in one room. In summer the small bedrooms are so hot and stifling that a large part of the tenement house population sleep on the roofs, the sidewalks and the fire-escapes. The other room, the kitchen, is generally the same size as the parlour upon which it opens, and receives all its light and air from the "air shaft" or from the front room. Behind these two rooms are the bed-rooms, so-called, which are hardly more than closets, being each about seven feet wide and eight feet six inches long, hardly long enough to contain a bed. These rooms get no light and air whatsoever, except that which comes from the air shaft and except upon the highest stories are generally almost dark. . . . In the public hall-way opposite the stairs, there are provided

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<sup>1</sup> A present-day condition not described by these authors is that of bedrooms which have neither window nor airshaft ventilation, and which obtain air through an eighteen inch screened opening into the outer hall.

two water-closets, each being used in common by two families and being lighted and ventilated by the "air-shaft," which also lights and ventilates all the bedrooms. In the newer buildings there is frequently provided, in the hallway between the two closets, a dumb-waiter for the use of the tenants.<sup>2</sup>

### Present Status of Housing

Tenement houses in New York City may be separated into two classes, "Old Law" and "New Law", the latter comprising structures erected under the improved Tenement Housing Code of 1901. Tyler Street, however, did not have a single "New Law" building. Within the entire Lower East Side area there were not more than 376 "New Law" buildings out of a total of 4,944 structures in 1930. Behind the tenement houses on the Lower East Side, more than 10,000 people still lived in 431 rear houses built on the inner side of the lot. On Tyler Street several of these rear houses were still in use.

The physical condition of the tenement dwellings in this block was under the supervision of the Tenement House Department of the City of New York. The actual inspection of the tenements was carried on by inspectors who, in times of prosperity, earned less than \$2,000.00 a year.<sup>3</sup> These ill-paid public servants were charged with reporting violations that might involve repairs costing thousands of dollars.

The extent of physical deterioration on Tyler Street is but mildly indicated by the fact that during the five year period from 1926 to 1930, 562 violations of the Housing Code were reported from this block by City inspectors. The average house had fifteen violations, the range being from one to forty-five. The following list of violations, reported for a Tyler Street house in

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<sup>2</sup> *The Tenement House Problem*—edited by Robert W. De Forest and Lawrence Veiller, 1903, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> A smartly dressed Tenement House Inspector with whom a tour of the block was made stated that "Any Inspector who takes his job seriously is a fool." He explained that it was almost impossible to reach owners in order to impress upon them the necessity of adjusting violations, but that despite the fact that the janitor was usually the only one seen, the inspector was nevertheless the butt of accusations of graft.

October, 1927, illustrates the state of physical deterioration of the average tenement on the block.

a. Structural defects:

Improperly secured vertical fire escape ladders.

Obstructing of fire-escapes by ornamental iron work between the rungs of connecting ladders.

A fire-trap condition, remedying which involved a fireproof passage-way into the building from the rear, or access to the rear yard through a door to be cut in an adjacent fence.

In connection with fire prevention, fire exit signs were recommended at appropriate points.

The water supply of the building was condemned as inadequate for both sink and water-closet uses.

b. Actual physical deterioration due to the neglect of the owner and his agents:

Rusty fire-escapes.

Broken and defective wooden cellar floor.

Broken brick arched ceilings of cellar water-closet compartment.

Broken door between cellar shaft and public hall.

Broken stone treads.

Defective seat and lead branch vent of water-closet.

Dirty and unsanitary bowl, walls and ceiling of closet.

Defective drain leader.

c. Indicative of the slovenly habits of dwellers:

The accumulation of rubbish in the air shaft, the rear yard, side yard, bulk-head, cellar, and cellar hall.

The length to which a dwelling was allowed to fall into disrepair before it became unfit for human habitation was illustrated by the house at No. 40 Tyler Street, charged with forty-five violations between 1927 and 1930:—

a. Structural defects:

Inadequate water supply for water-closets.

b. Actual physical deterioration due to owner's neglect and faulty janitor service:

Extremely deteriorated plumbing, including such defects as

leaky and broken water supply pipes, broken cellar waste pipe, broken and defective water-closet seats, obstructed water-closet soil pipe, defective lead vent in water-closet, obstructed water-closet trap, defective toilet-flushing apparatus, and broken sink in kitchen.

Dirty and unsanitary surfaces in apartments and halls.

Broken and defective plaster in apartments and halls.

Defective glass in apartments.

Improperly supported sinks.

Loose and defective stone treads.

Broken tile hall floor.

Broken brick arched ceiling of cellar.

Rusty drop ladder guides on fire-escape.

Insecure front top railing of fire-escape.

Absence of lighting fixture in hall.

Leaky roof.

c. Evidences of tenant neglect:

Accumulations of rubbish in halls and shaft.

The condition of Tyler Street housing was nowhere more clearly seen than in the matter of fire-escapes. Owners of these houses were within the law with respect to fire-escapes, but Tyler Street houses, being the fire traps that they were, required in the name of sheer humanity, a type of fire-escape that would not be almost as deadly as the element against which it was supposed to be a protection.

The Building Code of New York City allows three types of fire-escape—the balcony, the connecting ladder, and the stair case, the former two only on old-law building whereas the latter is required on new-law buildings. The balcony type of escape is merely a metal platform beneath adjacent windows in separate apartments, where the apartments have access to the street by separate stair-cases and have a fire-proof wall between them. This usually holds true only in the case of two adjacent separate structures. The connecting ladder type of escape consists of a series of grill work balconies directly below one another erected below the windows at successive floor levels, connected either by a perfectly up and down straight ladder, or by a

slightly inclined ladder. Both varieties of this type of escape are intended only for sure-footed, agile people, and cannot be used at all by children, the aged, infirm, physically handicapped and the ill, many of whom are condemned to death in the event of a conflagration. As a matter of fact, in many an East Side fire this type of escape has been the cause of death. The only safe type of fire-escape, a broad staircase with hand rails and platforms from floor to floor, such as is seen commonly on new-law apartment buildings, did not exist on Tyler Street, as it was not compulsory.

The statistics with regard to fire-escapes on this block were:

- Balcony, 1. Connecting ladder, 38; (a) vertical 22;
- (b) inclined 5; (c) both vertical and inclined 11.
- Staircases 0.

### Housing Uses

Apartments were used almost exclusively as family living quarters. Only ten out of 359 apartments were occupied by other groups, in 1931.

Only a few apartments were used for social or business purposes. The ground floor of a corner building served as a doctor's office, and the ground floor of the adjacent building housed the club rooms of the Third Samoa Club, a private social and athletic club. Across the street, first floor rear, were the offices of an Italian Benevolent Society.

The occupancy of apartments by unmarried groups of reprehensible behavior was restricted to one rear house, where eight apartments were occupied by a dissolute group of non-Italian white males with a reputation for drunkenness who, at the time of visit by a field investigator, were recovering from the effects of a drunken debauch, in the company of several women of various ages. This was the only group against which block residents registered a vigorous social disapproval.

The tendency of Italians to oppose drunkenness and promiscuous sex behavior may be illustrated by the fact that no open prostitution existed, and not a single arrest for prostitution had occurred on this block in many years.

## Rentals

The median rental in 1926 was \$21.50, compared with \$20.75 in 1931; with the majority of flats ranging between \$15.00, and \$30.00 a month.<sup>4</sup> In 1931 rentals were slightly lower, (Table I) and few families occupied flats having a rental over \$30.00 per month, while a number of apartments that formerly drew rent went rent-free in exchange for janitor service.

## Housing Congestion

Neither prosperity nor depression materially affected the housing congestion on Tyler Street, although the number of rooms in use tended to increase from 1926 to 1931. In 1931 there were no two room flats in use, and more five and six room flats were occupied, in proportion, than in 1926; but three and four room flats remained the standard dwellings. With rentals almost standing still the increase in rooms may have represented ad-

TABLE I  
HOUSING CONGESTION

Total Number of Families		Members in Family	Number of families in apartments of 2, 3, 4, 5, and over 5 rooms									
			2 Rooms		3 Rooms		4 Rooms		5 Rooms		Over 5 Rooms	
1926	1931		1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
4	2	2	..	2	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
31	7	3	5	14	3	12	4	..	..	..	..	..
63	35	4	2	27	18	33	15	1	2	..	..	..
48	39	5	3	16	13	26	23	3	2	..	..	1
36	32	6	1	8	6	26	24	1	2	..	..	..
28	19	7	..	6	2	22	13	..	1	..	..	3
15	16	8	..	6	1	8	11	1	4	..	..	..
15	12	9	..	..	3	9	8	5	..	1	1	1
5	3	10	..	..	..	4	3	..	..	1	..	..
2	3	11	..	..	..	1	3	1	..	..	..	..
..	1	12	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
247*	169		11	79	48	143	104	12	11	2	6	
%100	100		4%	32%	28%	58%	62%	5%	6%	1%	4%	

<sup>4</sup> Rents in 1926 and 1931 were as follows (1926 figures given first) \$0-8 per month, 0-2; \$9-14, 20-22; \$15-19, 57-57; \$20-29, 140-74; \$30-45, 19-3; not reported, 11-3; free rent for janitor service, 0-13.

\* Two family groups, counted as one in this table, occupied one apartment.

ditional purchasing power of the dollar. (Table 1, Housing Congestion).

Actual housing congestion, i.e., the number of persons per room, was 1.6 per room, for three room flats in both 1926 and 1931. In four room flats, congestion increased somewhat, from 1.40 to 1.55 per room, from 1926 to 1931.

### Push Cart and Stoop Markets

The picture of Tyler Street would be incomplete without a description of the open-air push-cart market lining its stoops and gutters. In 1931, sixty-three push carts parked on this street, shifting from side to side, from North to South, with the movement of the sun. Fifty-eight of them vended fruits and vegetables, four sold dry goods and one sold hardware. With the exception of three Jewish venders concentrated at one corner, the remainder were Italian. Roughly, three-quarters of the venders were men in the prime of life, helped by a few youngsters and elderly men and women.

The customers represented a more international aspect. While the greater number were Italian, there were also Polish, Russian, Spanish and Greek bargain seekers. The varied diet of the average Italian family was seen in the great variety of fruits and vegetables to be found on the push-carts, such as onions, potatoes, eggplants, Italian peppers, plum tomatoes, celery, Romaine lettuce, tomatoes, parsley, peaches, pears, bananas and honey-dew melons. Certain carts specialized on a single product, as for example, the sale of over-ripe tomatoes. Hardware carts sold bright colored kitchen accessories. Other articles for sale were bracelets, Italian sailor hats, straw beach hats, soap, paper napkins and cold cream. The dry goods carts specialized in children's underwear, rayon under-garments for women, games, threads, buttons, socks and blouses.

Customers went about in orderly groups, preferring to deal regularly with the same vender, if his prices were reasonable. Girls accompanied their mothers in shopping. Boys helped their fathers at the stands. About thirty-three stoop-line venders engaged in selling—twelve dealt in fruits and vegetables, ten in

groceries, four in dry goods, three in ice cream and candy, two in hardware and two in yard goods and remnants. The leading groceries sold were eggs, spices, appetizers and garlic. The other stoop-stands sold about the same variety of merchandise as the cart owners.

The pushcart market has been an old established institution on Tyler Street.<sup>5</sup> The business was not without its growing pains, one of its chief aches being graft. Graft colored the life of every push-cart market street, and brought to its residents an exceedingly sharp and clear picture of the majesty and venality of the law. During the period between the two surveys of Tyler Street the market system of New York was rocked by stories of graft and corrupt practices. The trail was said to lead from the policeman, who accepted bribes from unlicensed peddlers to storekeepers who demanded rent from unlicensed peddlers for using space in front of their stores. With graft, came the "fixer," sometimes known as the block President, who collected money and settled with the storekeepers and police, giving no accounting, and using strong-arm methods. During this period, the peddlers paid a \$4.00 license fee. Subsequently the license fee was raised to \$52.00 per year, or \$1.00 per week, and the ownership of a license and place assignment became a matter of high finance, places being sold for as high as \$1,000.00. A relatively recent introduction of methods of bookkeeping reduced the opportunities for graft, and a recent grand jury was unable to find specific instances of corrupt practices. Within the last several years a movement started to take the push-carts off the open street and put them in ten centralized enclosed and open-air sites where they would be most needed. The plan did not make much headway, however, due to the sharp protest of neighborhood

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<sup>5</sup> The conditions conducive to the push-cart system have been the following:

1. The great immigration wave from countries where open trading was common.
2. The growth of slums.
3. Grading of food and merchandise.
4. The growth of population, demanding an increase in food supplies.
5. Gluts on the market, due to shipping of supplies by producers, regardless of price and demand.
6. Small size of push-cart business investment.
7. Periods of business depression, and consequent consumer economy.



associations, and the possibilities are that the Tyler Street market, in common with some fifty-two other permanent public market centers, will continue in existence for many years.

### Street Life

The block had an active rhythm which varied with the hour and with the day of the week. During week days, the street was crowded and full of life; with push-cart business going on briskly and children playing on the walks. On Saturdays, in the early afternoons, there was great life and activity. Pushcart buying and selling was brisk. The street was filled with rubbish, numbers of cars were parked and several hundred customers crowded the pavements. Among them played many small children.

Late Saturday afternoons found fathers and other adults on the débris-littered street, conversing in groups, with traffic slow and push-carts practically all removed. There would be perhaps a hundred adults and very few children on the street.

Sunday was a day of rest, characterized by markedly diminished activity. In the early morning activity centered around the church. By afternoon, the Street Cleaning Department had cleaned the street and markedly improved its appearance. There was little traffic and only a number of small boys were out. In the evening, the street was practically deserted, only an occasional person leaving a tenement; by nine o'clock it was absolutely lifeless and deserted.

At no time was the street utilized by older children for play use, for lack of free play space.

### Composition of Tyler Street Families

Tyler Street was a stronghold of the large family of the last generation. Birth control and its inevitable trend toward the small family had made little apparent inroad upon this tiny South European colony. Thus, whereas the proportion of children to adults in Manhattan and in New York State as a whole was in the ratio of one child to two adults, the population of this

block was exactly reversed—two children to one adult—in both survey years. There was a tendency toward a slight increase in the proportion of older as compared to younger children. (Table 2, Composition of Tyler Street families.)

TABLE 2  
COMPOSITION OF TYLER STREET FAMILIES

	1926	%	1931	%
Boarders .....	...	..	10	1
Adult family members .....	485	36	332	33
<i>Children under 16</i>				
Boys .....	415	31	279	28
Girls .....	288	21	181	18
<i>Children 16 and over</i>				
Boys .....	101	8	109	11
Girls .....	50	4	86	9
	1339	100%	997	100%

An analysis of the size of the family, i.e., of all male and female births, regardless of the age of the offspring, revealed a strong tendency toward large families and a disproportionate tendency toward dominance of male over female offspring in families with children of both sexes.

### Broken Homes

Normal homes, i.e., homes having both father and mother present, comprised the great majority on Tyler Street. The proportion was so far above that found in broad samplings of families in the United States<sup>6</sup> that a special explanation is necessary. The explanation is that, on this block, in accord with slum practice, families which became broken disintegrated entirely, and the remnants were absorbed by relatives and custodial in-

<sup>6</sup> Thus, whereas the proportion of broken homes discovered in previous social studies of family life in the United States ranged from 25% to 30%, the percentage of broken homes on the Tyler Street block was 6% in 1926 and 10% in 1931.

stitutions.<sup>7</sup> There was a sound economic reason for this. The proportion of male, foreign-born, non-citizens of remote immigration among this group was so high that few mothers were privileged to receive a widow's pension, and the children had to be institutionalized or reared by relatives. Again, where the mother died, the father usually could not afford a housekeeper, and the home was broken. Thus, in 1926, in only two of fourteen fatherless families were the mothers receiving widow's pensions. (Table 3, Civil Status of Tyler Street Parents.)

TABLE 3  
CIVIL STATUS OF TYLER STREET PARENTS

<i>Parental condition</i>	1926 <i>No. Families</i>	%	1931 <i>No. Families</i>	%
Father and mother both living .....	226	90	157	87
Father only living .....	3	1	5	3
Father only, living with relatives .....	1	*	..	..
Mother only living .....	14	6	10	6
Step-father and own mother .....	2	*	2	1
Father and step-mother .....	2	*	2	1
Mother insane, father dead .....	1	*	..	..
Both parents dead .....	..	..	1	*
Parents separated (father away) .....	..	..	1	*
Child adopted .....	..	..	1	*
	249		179	

The solidarity of the family group was further illustrated by the small number of boarders, none being recorded in 1926 and but ten in 1931.

### Birth-place, Language and Literacy

The great majority of parents were foreign born, and the majority of their children were American born, although in the period between the two survey years there was a slight increase

<sup>7</sup> A "broken home" is defined as one in which the family is broken by the death, separation, or divorce of either one or the other parent. Such a measure of the family break takes no cognizance of psychological ruptures due to marital discord. (See *Broken Homes and Delinquency* by Clifford L. Shaw, *Journal of Social Forces*, June, 1932.)

\* Less than 1%.

in the number of American born parents, consisting primarily of married sons and daughters who took up residence on the home block. The number of foreign born non-Italian parents was negligible. In 1926, there were 501 Italian fathers and mothers, 4 Spanish, 4 Irish and seven Russian Jewish. In 1931, all were Italian. In 1926, 482 boys were born in the United States, 27 in Italy, 4 in Spain and 3 in Russia. (Table 4, Birth-place of Tyler Street Parents.)

TABLE 4  
BIRTH-PLACE OF TYLER STREET PARENTS

<i>Birth-Place</i>	<i>Father</i>		<i>Mother</i>	
	1926	1931	1926	1931
United States .....	..	9	11	18
Italy .....	214	163	218	152
Ireland .....	2	..	2	..
Russia .....	3	..	3	..
Spain .....	2	..	2	..
Not known .....	28	7	13	9
Totals	249	179	249	179

The slowness of the process of assimilation was strikingly indicated by the proportion who still clung to the native tongue.<sup>8</sup> In 1931 roughly one-third of the parents spoke only a foreign tongue, and of the remainder practically all spoke both English and the native tongue in the home. The retention of the native tongue undoubtedly aided the survival of Italian cultural

<sup>8</sup> In 1926, 20% of the fathers and 34% of the mothers and in 1931, 30% of the fathers and 31% of mothers spoke only their native language. The rise in proportion of the Italian-speaking fathers from 1926 to 1931 is to be attributed to a loss from the block during that period of the more assimilated residents, causing an increase in percentage without an increase in actual numbers of foreign speaking fathers. The comparison of foreign and English speaking parents is not as simple as would be indicated by this bi-lingual classification, for among those who spoke English there was a considerable range, varying from those who spoke only English to those who spoke very little English. Unfortunately the 1926 study did not make these comparisons; but for 1931 the proportion of English speaking parents has been classified into those who spoke English only, those who spoke Italian and English, and those who spoke Italian and very little English, in the home. It will be seen that the proportion of those who had been completely assimilated and spoke only English was practically nil.

traditions, although in a very large proportion of bi-lingual homes the parents spoke English to the children and Italian among themselves. Just how far this bi-lingual process had gone in the direction of making the parents competent in the handling of problems outside of the traditional culture patterns can be determined only indirectly. One clue to the extent of their assimilation of the American scene lies in the proportion of parents who read the English language, and the English newspapers. The statistics for the two survey years are not comparable, as the figures for 1926 do not separate literates in English, from the literates in a foreign language only.<sup>9</sup> In 1931 the proportion of total illiterates was 40.5%; 39% read a foreign language only and 20½% read only English or English and a foreign language.<sup>10</sup> The differences between fathers and mothers were slight and inconsequential.

Thus, in 1931 the majority of the parents had to obtain their picture of the American scene either via the foreign language press or via word of mouth communication. In either event it is evident that the horizon of the average parent from this block was exceedingly narrow, by virtue of this blockage of communication. It was observed by the 1926 surveyors that this limitation of horizon tended to facilitate the breach between the parents and their American-born children, with a resultant parental sense of inferiority and lack of authority in dealing with their children's behavior.

### The Tyler Street Home

The home of the Tyler Street family represented in many respects the typical 19th century domicile. The American standard of living, represented by modern plumbing and extensive use

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<sup>9</sup> Thus, in 1926, the great proportion of parents were listed as illiterate. This obviously is an error since the large number listed in 1931 as reading a foreign language cannot be accounted for by an educational process that went on between the two survey years.

<sup>10</sup> The 1931 proportion of illiteracy in the block was comparable to that in Italy as a whole at the time many of these parents came to the United States. In 1911 the gross illiteracy of Italy was 38%; but in the Province of Calabria, from which a large number of the block residents came, illiteracy was in that year approximately 70%.

of electrical appliances, had not caught up with Tyler Street, save in a limited way. For example, roughly one-quarter of the residents had radios, yet practically all had stove heat; the greater proportion had electric illumination, yet most homes had no bathtub and shared a hall toilet with another family. Only 16% in 1926 and 13% in 1931, had private toilets. Only 4 out of 174 families had telephones.<sup>11</sup>

There were no important changes in the physical aspect of the home between 1926 and 1931. Many large families still lived in three or four small rooms, and paid an average rental of from \$20.00 to \$25.00 per month. However, 48% of the residents enjoyed hot water in 1931, whereas only 5% had hot water in 1926. This undoubtedly represented an attempt on the part of property owners to make their property more attractive to tenants in order to stem the tide of population loss.

The installation of hot water was not generally accompanied by the provision of bathtubs. Only in 11 instances, in 1931, did a home have a tub, as compared with none in 1926, and the installation was most often in combination with the kitchen sink. In several homes the bathtub was filled with coal, the householder explaining that he had no cellar space, and that he used this storage space to protect his coal from theft.

Dumb-waiters, although part of the equipment of every building were not in use, and in most instances had been boarded up by order of the Tenement House Department because janitor service for the removal of garbage was not provided. Many tenants, however, dumped their garbage down the dumb-waiter shaft, where it was allowed to accumulate and rot.

Many flats, opening on the street or on large back yards, were large, sunny, and well-ventilated, whereas others were very gloomy and pervaded with a perpetual twilight. Generally, the upper floors were sunnier and better ventilated, and thus compensated their tenants for the tiresome daily climb.

A picture of the life of the average home was drawn by a field visitor in 1926:

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<sup>11</sup> The 1926 survey did not report the general facts with regard to heating, illumination, telephone, and musical instruments; therefore, no comparison for the two survey years is possible.

Three or four rooms without modern convenience, in old-law tenements in poor condition of repair, with dirty, dark hallways, are the usual homes of families of from three to seven members. A dim kitchen, with the gas light burning all day, is the center of the home, with the other rooms opening out of it. One room in most of the homes is light, facing on the street, but because of the difficulty of heating, is used very little in winter, except for sleeping. Heating, even in severe cold weather, is limited to the evening cooking hour, when the heat from the gas stove is supposed to warm up the home. Cold water only is provided. There are no baths, and toilet facilities in the outside halls are used by several families. A weak, flickering gas flame in the center of the kitchen provides a meager light for study in the evening.

The parents are Sicilian-Italian—the father usually a laborer, sometimes with a job and sometimes without—the mother supplements the irregular income by finishing coats and pants, sewing by gas light in the kitchen. Chairs and tables and floors are piled high with unfinished work. Even the younger boys and girls are often seen helping with the bastings and sewing. Too busy to stop at noon to prepare a meal for the children, lest they waste some precious minutes from their sewing, the mothers give each child a nickel or a dime to buy ham and mustard sandwiches at the neighboring delicatessen shop, sometimes an extra nickel or dime to bring back sandwiches to the mother and smaller children. Only in the evening, when the father comes home, is a hot meal prepared for the family.

Questions of discipline are solved usually by a cuff or a blow accompanied by loud profanity on the part of the father, mother and older children. All day, while the mothers are sewing, the smaller boys and girls (two to six years old) play in the hallways and street, or sit around the kitchen. In the evening sometimes the sewing is relaxed in a few homes, in others it continues until ten or eleven o'clock. The kitchen is the center of everything, the father usually sitting unoccupied, the mother and neighbors sewing, the school children studying their lessons at the table, neighbors going in and out. Sometimes when there is a party of the older people, the little children play in the hallways, while the school children go on with their lessons under difficulties. It is usually ten or eleven o'clock before any one in the family, even the youngest, can go to bed, because all the rooms are used as bed rooms, even the kitchen having folding beds in the corners.

In 1931, this picture would have remained unchanged, except

for the elimination of nearly all home industry through the depression unemployment of mothers.

### Cultural Backgrounds of the Home

There are few objective measures of cultural background. An attempt has been made of indirect measurement by tabulation of the presence or absence of books and musical instruments and the extent of literacy among parents. Measured in these rather inadequate quantitative terms, the homes on this block were found to be almost barren of literary influences, but relatively abundant in evidence of musical interest and appreciation.

Approximately one-fourth of the homes were completely devoid of cultural influences—being without musical instruments or books. In 137 out of 175 families tabulated there were no books; but only 56 of 178 families tabulated were without musical instruments in 1931, the remainder having more than 141 musical instruments. In all, there were found 62 phonographs, 49 radios, and 30 pianos. In 12 instances, both radio and phonograph were present; in 5 instances both radio and piano; in 2 instances both phonograph and piano; and 2 families possessed a radio, piano, and phonograph.

The years of prosperity had witnessed a great increase in musical instrument ownership for, in 1926, 30 of the 248 families had 83 musical instruments, compared to 122 families having 141 instruments in 1931. Among the 38 families possessing books, only one young American-born couple possessed a library worthy of mention, consisting of 100 volumes of modern fiction, including such substantial authors as Thomas Mann and Elmer Rice. Three families with but a small number of books showed some selective literary taste. Thus, in one home, fifteen volumes of adventure books, Dickens and Shakespeare were found. Another family had books by Mark Twain and Booth Tarkington. A third had but two volumes, *Frenzied Finance* and *Life of Emerson*. One home held a single book, *The Outline of History*, a gift from an employer.

Boys' adventure books were found in six homes and included such titles as: *Boy Scout Adventures*, *Three Musketeers*, *Nick*



*Carter and Cow Boy Tales*. One home had a dozen 5 and 10¢ novels. Another home had such an odd assortment as *Personal Magnetism*, *Arabian Nights* and a health volume by Doctor Copeland. Individual copies of unusual books, such as *Dracula* and *America in the Making* were found. In 8 instances school books, ranging from 10 to 20 in number were found.

The number of books discovered does not necessarily indicate the extent of reading in the various households, inasmuch as some individuals undoubtedly utilized library resources. The books that were found, however, indicated that only a scant handful of the people on this block were acquainted with either classical or modern fiction, and none appeared to be acquainted with the natural sciences, philosophy or history.

### Variations in Cultural Status

To the sociologist who is concerned with broad and sweeping characterizations of areas as being interstitial, suburban, apartment, residential, etc., it may come as a surprise that the economic designation of areas does not necessarily carry with it a concomitant uniformity in the nature of the environment of the child. Tyler Street is a case in point.

From an economic and housing standpoint, its homes would appear superficially to have as few differences as peas in a pod, yet an examination of the records of the individual families residing therein shows a wide range of intelligence, ambition, cultural interests, and family solidarity. Within this single slum block lay home influences that, in the next generation, might lead to professional careers and wealth, and on the other extreme, to prisons, jails, and institutions for the indigent. Between these extremes lay a range of varying levels of cultural status. This range is represented by the following five case excerpts.

First are given two cases (Case 1 and 2) showing good cultural backgrounds; next, (Case 3) a case of low cultural background, compensated for by a vigorous, aggressive family attitude; and finally, two cases (Case 4 and 5) illustrating a low cultural background and low physical and moral standards.

*Case 1—*

Man, wife and child were seen. Both parents were born in this country and had been graduated from elementary schools. The home was poor, but had good pieces of kitchen furniture. The father himself had painted the walls, had installed electricity, and had built book cases in the living room which he had filled with books, many of them well chosen novels and biographies. The wife said she loved reading.

The husband was a house painter, had worked for a milk concern for seven years, and had lost his job four months previously. He had just found work as a truck-driver. They were an ambitious and quite modern young couple. Both smoked, and the wife was allowed freedom outside of the home. The children were well fed and well dressed. Their mother hoped both would be able to get a college education.

Both parents had been reared on this block, although the wife had lived for two years with an aunt in the Middle West. The couple had lived on the block for seven years.

*Case 2—*

The entire family was seen. The home was very clean and tastefully arranged. The girls were singing and playing the piano.

The mother was illiterate but appeared intelligent. The father was of a more intellectual type than the other men on the block. He had been president of his lodge and was interested in outside affairs. He read and was up to date on the news of the day. He expressed himself fluently and said he was ashamed that many Italians, though they didn't need financial help, were beggars. He held that the race was not inferior in spite of so-called Nordic supremacy. He had interesting views on many subjects. He had had contact with leading Italians of the city.

The 21 year old girl worked in a corset factory three days a week, and the seventeen year old girl was a book-keeper.

The atmosphere was better than in the average home on this block. The father stated that seasonal unemployment, and a long illness (nervous breakdown) had retarded them economically, so that they could not afford to move out of the district.

*Case 3—*

Before becoming a porter, the informant did pick and shovel work. When seen, he was washing clothes in the wash tub and had made a hot lunch for the children at noon. The mother had taught the father how to read and write. This was an aggressive family. The father (informant) appeared to have a great deal of native intelligence. He belonged to the Italian-American Citizen's Club, Inc., an independent political club.

The informant was a hard-working husband. He came home at four-thirty in the morning and slept until about eight, when the house became so noisy that he could not sleep any longer. Then he rose and did the family washing, prepared a hot lunch for the children, and put the house in order before he went to work at five-thirty in the afternoon. He said that he had a very mean boss.

*Case 4—*

The home was very dirty and unkempt. The family had moved here four months ago because of cheaper rent, hot water and electricity.

The parents were seen. The woman looked as if she never used soap and water. The father was cleaner but did not seem very strong. The woman had varicose veins which were broken, and she had sores all over her legs. The husband had had a hernia four times. He operated a pushcart, aided by his wife. On a nearby block they had a basement store-room for produce. A son sold bananas all over the East Side, using a horse and wagon.

One son, 21, worked a few days a week in a fish market. The older boy, age 26, was in Clinton State Prison for selling cocaine. He had written his mother to find a job for him as his case was coming up before the Parole Board. The mother thought he had a good record. He had improved, grown strong and fat in prison, but she knew he could not get a job because even good men were out of work. She was going to write him to come home and help his father at the stand, as she was too sick to help him much more.

The youngest son shined shoes after school, but as he did not earn much, the mother preferred to have him help her at the stand. Every night he attended a club at 9 James Street. All her boys went there she stated, until they were seventeen.

### Marital Maladjustments

Marital maladjustments were encountered relatively infrequently. This may be accounted for, first, on the ground that where family disorganization as a result of gross family discord had taken place, such families would probably break up and cease to exist as economic units. Again, a necessarily limited contact such as was afforded by the survey investigations would not be expected to disclose any but flagrant cases of existing marital discord. Finally, among people of the type represented in this block, there was every evidence that the marriage tie was a permanent one, to be endured at all costs.

There was a striking absence of reference to sexual promiscuity. The old virtues which in previous American generations have been referred to as sustaining the sanctity of the home seemed, outwardly at least, to be characteristic of these families. In only two instances was there a report of marital infidelity—in both instances on the part of the husband.

#### *Case 5—*

Investigator saw mother and son, who was home from school because of illness. The home was clean, though poor looking. There were a few leather upholstered chairs. The bedroom was dark. When visitor asked woman's name, she became hysterical, saying that for seven years she had been bothered by people, and she refused to give it. Little by little she quieted down and said that her husband had sent to Italy for her nineteen years ago, and had married her at the Battery. They had lived in the section ever since.

Seven years ago, the husband had met a cousin, and he later left home to live with her. The wife had refused a legal separation and her husband visited her every other month and paid her about \$10.00 a week, sometimes less. The woman had

worked until two months previous in a pants factory on East Broadway, maintaining a home as best she could. Pictures showed her as having been stout, but she had grown thin, pale and nervous. She said her husband had broken her heart. Four of her five children were dead. Both her parents died in Italy, her mother having thrown herself off a bridge when she learned two boys had died on the battle-field during the war.

This woman spoke no English and was not interested in the block, as the women neighbors asked too many questions. She had rheumatism and could only do occasional home work. Her only interest consisted in bringing her boy up as well as she could and in going to church. She seemed intelligent and clean, but nervous.

### Broken Homes

Several homes, broken by death, were to be found. In one instance violent crime was a cause of death. In another instance is illustrated the distress of a father attempting to maintain a motherless home.

#### *Case 6—*

The husband died seven months ago. He was the janitor, and now the widow paid rent. She was awaiting a paper from Italy before she could apply for a widow's pension.

The sons—24 and 22—were married, and had their own homes. They had children and were unable to help their mother.

The husband had been insured, but there was not much left when the funeral expenses were paid. He was killed by a robber who entered the funeral parlors where he was employed. Because of violent death, the insurance claim was doubled. This amount was turned over to the brother, who was the proprietor of the funeral parlors. A big funeral was necessary, because "it was their own funeral parlor, and the Italians talk so much." "We had mourners, a band and an orchestra." Since then the remainder has been used to keep the family in food, and the sum was just about gone.

A married son lived on the same floor. He did not know

anything of the cost of the funeral, as he was away at that time. His mother did not confide anything in him, because he did not approve of the old Italian ideas about "such things."

*Case 7—*

The father had been drinking. He was very garrulous, and said that he thought he would go crazy because of worry. Had not worked for two years. He owed \$200.00 for groceries. Three daughters were in an orphanage. One boy (12) was ill in City Hospital with heart trouble. He wrote to the father asking him to visit him, but the father couldn't go because he had no money.

"I never owed a cent in my life, and now I owe rent, light, gas, and money to the orphanage. I must pay \$8.30 a week for the children."

The father showed a letter written from the orphanage, saying that since the oldest daughter, age sixteen, had reached the age limit, she would be obliged to leave. This was a great worry to the father, as he could not keep her at home, and chances for her employment were very meager. He added that he would not have her home alone, because often times so many "bad things" happen to young girls.

The framed picture of the deceased wife was draped in black.

The husband showed the investigator his marriage license, and expressed the wish that his wife were alive.

The informant was too incoherent to give a plausible reason why charitable aid by a private relief agency had been discontinued.

He bemoaned his fate, and said that he was a very "unlucky guy."

### Occupations and Employment of Parents

The occupational status of the Tyler Street parent was generally at the unskilled labor level. The proportion of common laborers engaged in pick and shovel work, in building construction, in garment factories and as freight handlers, was 70% in 1926 and 53% in 1931.

Skilled mechanics represented about 10% of the 1926 occu-

pational distribution and about 15% of the 1931 distribution. Another group of comparable percentage consisted of local store-keepers and pushcart merchants. Among the remainder were a handful of persons, such as barbers, milkmen, and bootblacks, who engaged in various forms of personal service. Not a single professional man or white collar worker was recorded.

In 1926 the number of working mothers almost equalled the number of fathers irregularly employed. Among 151 mothers commercially employed, 49 worked outside of the home while 102 worked at home. Among the latter, five were in miscellaneous occupations, such as dressmaker, store-keeper and janitress, and 97 were finishers of men's clothing. The employment of such a large proportion of mothers was necessitated by the extreme irregularity of the paternal income.

### Prosperity and Depression in Relation to Employment

Occupational data gathered for Tyler Street during prosperity and depression represented a conservative comparison, indicating average rather than extreme differences between the two periods. When the 1926 data were gathered, the height of prosperity had not been reached, nor when the 1931 data were gathered had the depth of depression been plumbed. The Stock Market bubble had not yet been blown to its fullest in 1926; and the financial panic of 1933 had not been foreshadowed during the second survey. The comparison of the two survey years, therefore, does not illustrate the depths of misery to which the working class was driven during 1932 and 1933.

Prosperity meant very little in dollars and cents to this marginal group of workers. To the average Tyler Street father, prosperity meant \$10.00 more in his weekly pay envelope, a part of which was spent on a few instalment payments for "luxuries" in the home, but most of which was absorbed by higher prices. The modal income group shifted very slightly between depression and prosperity, 55% of the fathers having earned between \$25.00 and \$30.00 a week during 1926 and 31% having earned within the same limits in 1931. In 1931, however, 44% of the

fathers earned between \$15.00 and \$24.00, whereas, in 1926, none of the fathers earned less than \$25.00 a week. The higher income group, which earned between \$40.00 and \$50.00 a week in 1926, was reduced to 5% in 1931.

In 1926, only 10 or 4% of parents were unemployed; in 1931 41 or 24% were unemployed. Combining regular and irregular employment in 1926, 29 or 13% worked regularly and 159 or 68% worked irregularly, a total of 81%;<sup>12</sup> whereas in 1931 total employment was but 65%; consisting of 49 or 30% regularly employed and 60 or 35% irregularly employed with an additional 6% on part time made work supported by emergency relief agencies.

Perhaps the most striking result of the depression was the reduction in number of working mothers, from 151 or 62% in 1926 to 59 or 35% in 1931, and the increase in non-working mothers from 94 or 38% to 111 or 65%. The proportion of mothers employed in the home at garment work fell from 102 or 42% in 1926 to 36 or 21% in 1931. There was a corresponding drop in the earnings of mothers. Whereas in 1926, 101 mothers earned between \$6.00 and \$10.00 a week, and 48 from \$15.00 to \$35.00 a week; in 1931, only 7 earned between \$15.00 and \$35.00, 14 earned between \$6.00 and \$10.00, 9 earned up to \$5.00, and 31 reported no income. Among the latter 15 assisted either in their husband's stores or at their push-carts and 8 worked as janitresses in return for either rental reduction or free rental. The Tyler Street home in 1931 was no longer a miniature sweat-shop as described by the 1926 investigators. This limitation of income was very sharply felt, and was a universal source of bitter lament.

### Family Economic Status During Depression

The economic depression of 1929 adversely affected the home lives of the majority of Tyler Street families, influencing the home atmosphere, the relations of parents and children, and the activities of the children themselves. In 1931, only 54 out of 158 Tyler Street families were in relatively adequate economic circumstances—4 families were in good circumstances, with in-

<sup>12</sup> In 36 or 15% of the cases there was no report on employment in 1926.



comes that allowed for savings, and 50 families had incomes adequate for their continuance at a low economic and cultural level—while 104 families felt the pinch of poverty in various degrees. Among the latter, 57 had inadequate incomes and part-time employment, with savings depleted; 28 were on the edge of financial disaster, with an almost total absence of income, practically depleted resources, and an imminent need of public relief; in 19 cases the family was sustained through home and job relief. In 17 instances the economic status was not clear enough for classification.

The total force of the depression could not be measured, because it was impossible to obtain precise data on the total income of all wage earners.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to evaluate the effect of the depression, not however in terms of gross income, but in terms of family economic status in 1931, compared to their statement of past economic status.

In classifying families according to immediate economic status the possibility is always present that those families who were in desperate economic straits were not necessarily victims of the depression, but were rather victims of ill health or of loss of the wage earner through death or separation. In order to safeguard against these variables the case records of the individual families have been analyzed for the effect of the depression alone as a factor in distress.

The unemployment of parents and children within the two years prior to re-survey was considered as an adequate base for measuring the effect of the depression. The use of this criterion made it evident that a very large proportion of families suffering economic distress, could attribute their condition directly to

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<sup>13</sup> An attempt at measuring the total income was made during the 1926 survey. The comment was made at that time that it was very difficult to obtain any definite information on the exact earnings, since practically all of the unskilled labor and garment work was irregular, varying from one-half to three-quarters full time, and the residents did not keep a record of their earnings throughout the course of the year.

The sketchy results of that inquiry were that 154 out of 248 had an income of between \$20.00 and \$50.00 a week; but the 1926 survey estimated the actual income at probably one-half that amount. There was some evidence that part of the income of the family, especially where the mother was working, was being sent to relatives in Italy.

the depression. Thus, of four families in relatively adequate economic condition, only one complained of unemployment and reduction of income. Among fifty families in the "A"<sup>14</sup> classification, only sixteen complained of loss of income and of unemployment. Among 57 cases of inadequate income in the "B" group, thirty-nine reported specific depression unemployment and loss of income, and in the "C" group, of 28 cases on the verge of financial distress, twenty-six reported conditions directly attributable to the depression. Finally, in the "D" group, consisting of cases already forced to accept public and private relief, of nineteen cases, seventeen traced their economic difficulties to the depression. Thus of one hundred and four families that felt poverty in various degrees, only twenty-two cases were attributed to conditions other than the depression. Within the "A" group, two distinct types of family whose status was still above average, suffered from the depression. They were families that had moved out of the neighborhood when on the upgrade but had been forced to return because of unemployment, and small merchants whose earnings had been sharply reduced.

### Depression Case Studies

Intelligence, ambition, cultural interests, and a comfortable home background were characteristic qualities of the large group of families in the "A" grade. These families, despite their surroundings, managed to achieve the maximum degree of comfort and hopefulness for the future. In the struggle for existence these probably were the families best endowed for success. Only six of these fifty families reported wage earners in poor health or suffering from ailments. Such characterizations as "strong,"

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<sup>14</sup> The following degrees of economic status were defined:

- AA—Families in good circumstances whose income allows for savings.
- A—Income adequate to allow continuance at a low economic level.
- B—Income inadequate, savings depleted, and only part time employment.
- C—Income almost totally absent and resources almost totally depleted with need of partial public relief.
- D—No income from wages, resources depleted, and dependent upon job relief.

"healthy," "robust," "energetic," were scattered through descriptions of the remaining families.

There was, however, a range of cultural standards among the "A" group, and the cases in the sampling illustrate varying cultural levels within a relatively homogeneous economic group.

A typically successful family is that described in Case 8.

*Case 8—*

The home was neat, very clean and comfortable, consisting of five rooms. The mother was a pleasant woman; the father was one of oldest settlers on Tyler Street. All of their eight children had been born here. Father worked for the Department of Highways. The oldest boy was married, had three children and lived next door. Two girls earned \$10.00 each per week in dress factories. One boy was learning to be a printer but had been out of work for over a year. Next boy was in third year high school. The children were evidently intelligent, but they leaned on parents. Married boy did not want to move away from mother, who was very good to him.

The father enjoyed his work. The mother said he was actually sick when he had three weeks' vacation, because he missed his work and companions.

"My children are good children. They say, 'Let us move away from here.' All right, they can move; but my husband and I have been here most of our lives. My friends are on this street. I stay here.

"My big worry is to feed and clothe so many. Big boys need lunch money and carfare. My husband says, 'Why give them money?'—but I feel differently. As long as I am here my children must be treated kindly. They cannot move without some money in pockets.

"I keep boy in school—there is no work. They eat if they are on the street—better eat and be in school. As long as father works there is a piece of bread for all, even if no shoes or clothes."

There were eight members in the family—the parents, two girls, ages 18 and 17, respectively, and four boys, ages 19, 15, 13 and 11, respectively. The approximately total weekly income was \$50.00, an average of \$6.25 per person.

## Marginal Families

Contrary to what might have been expected, the families in the "B" group were not those driven out of better economic and housing areas into the slums, but were on the contrary, a generally stable and immobile resident group, representing an even greater degree of permanence than the average for the block. Thus, whereas more than two-thirds of the total block population had lived more than ten years on the block, within the "B" group, 75% had lived there ten years and over.

This group of families felt the pinch of poverty keenly, although maintaining a brave, if futile, struggle to remain solvent. Here the evidences of cultural interests were fewer, and references to cleanliness, ambition and good health were less frequent. Even within this group, however, there were tangible differences in cultural standards.

*Case 9—*

The home was very comfortable, very clean and well kept, though simple. There were a table and chairs, a new radio, and family pictures on the walls. The mother, who was quite stout, very clean, and pleasant-mannered, showed a friendly attitude toward neighbors in the house, speaking of how "saintly" the girls were in one family and "how bright and quiet" the boys in another were.

Husband had not been working four years. "If young men cannot get work, how can my husband, who is forgetting numbers and names of streets?" "I have had twelve children—six born in America (on this block)—two died, seven are married. One, a tailor, had nine children. The oldest boy (30) worked in a market—for \$10.00 a week. Girl earned \$8.00-\$10.00 in factory. Joseph, 20, worked for 'Electric Company' for the last four years. He cut off part of two fingers on a machine but was still with the same employer, earning \$15.00 a week.

"Two years ago 'boss' put in electric lights. We pay \$2.00 more a month. Our stove is broken—boss says he too poor to buy a new one. We keep our apartment clean, but it needs new paint. Boss does not care. He is Italian with big stomach, very

arrogant. He says if you do not like it, get out. Ten families move, apartments empty—too much rent. They can find cheaper rooms nearer bridge for less money.

“Priest asks for money—Church is not finished. We can see bricks, but let rich people help pay for it. I belong to Sister’s Society. Have paid 10¢ month for sixteen years. When I die \$25.00 mass will be said for my soul. I would die if I had to move where I did not know families—to another block—even with cheaper rent. By time I move it will not be so cheap.”

Man and woman both were illiterate, and did not speak any English at all.

There were five members in the family—the parents, a girl of 18 and two sons 30 and 20. The total income was approximately \$25.00 per week, an average of \$5.00 per person.

Group C consists of those families on the verge of economic collapse, in which the wage earners had been out of work for a long time, of which case 10 is typical.

*Case 10—*

The mother (informant) had just returned from the Beekman Hospital clinic, where she attended the cardiac clinic. She was of dull mentality, absolutely unschooled, but pleasant and neat.

The informant, pointing to the array of push-carts below the window, said that she did not have to go to the country, she need only to look out the window to see the beautiful green vegetables, and bright colored fruit.

They were dispossessed from Market Street for non-payment of rent. They had not paid the rent here for two months. The gas had been shut off for three months. The mother bought “tuna fish and canned things.” There was no coal or wood stove and no other means of making a fire, so a hot meal could be prepared.

Her daughter, eight dressed neatly, and clean, was studying. All of the books were covered.

The rooms, all with windows, were airy and light. The floor covering of linoleum was clean and quite new. A collapsible cot in one corner was covered with cheap material. There was a

long mirror beside it. The furniture showed that the family had experienced more prosperous times. There were religious calendars and pictures on the wall.

The problem in this family was quite acute for they were becoming very tired of cold meals. The mother spoke of killing herself if conditions did not become better soon.

There were seven members in the family—the parents and four girls, ages 17, 15, 8 and 4, and one boy of 18. The approximate total weekly income was \$13.00 a week, an average of \$1.85 per person.

In the final group were families that either required immediate relief or were already dependent upon relief or made work; of which case 11 is typical.

#### *Case 11—*

The family consisted of two brothers and the father.

The kitchen contained nothing beyond a table and three broken chairs. There was a gas leak which the father was afraid to complain about as he was several months behind in his gas bills.

The younger boy, who came up from the street during the interview, seemed quiet and somewhat bashful. The visitor had noticed him several times before in the street, always making something out of wood, and had seen him finish a strong, well-made wagon with four wheels. The boy needed a bath badly, he literally stank as he stood there.

The father was very much bothered about his financial and economic troubles and visited quite a number of social and philanthropic societies.

He was in a terrible financial position. With no one working, he had only 3¢ to his name. He was in fear of being dispossessed, and the gas bill was unpaid. He had appealed to various social agencies. One gave him \$10.00 and a pair of shoes. Another gave him a dollar for each of three weeks. He was six months behind in rent.

He used to be a boss longshoreman but had been unemployed

since his wife died of tuberculosis. Before she died she cost him a lot of money. When she died he had 50¢ in his pocket. The only food in the house consisted of a few tomatoes.

He said there are a great many empty apartments, but these had been empty a long time; some two years, some less. From month to month, little by little people had been moving out. He did not know why there were many more apartments empty at the Market Street end of the block.

"There was never any trouble from big fellows on the block. Among the Sicilians, one family will not tell what happens in the family to others even if some one is dying."

"Older men spend their time gambling in speakeasies and cafes, but smaller boys do not go there. The neighborhood has been the same for the last fifteen years."

A relative of this man's, a young fellow who never worked had been arrested on the complaint of some women in the neighborhood, and had remained in jail for a week.

There were three members in the family—the father and two boys, ages 16 and 13. There was no income. The father had been applying for and receiving temporary emergency relief.

### Tyler Street A Racial Colony

Many blocks in New York City are the temporary habitat of a migratory group of mixed populations. Tyler Street was not one of these. The Tyler Street block is sociologically of great interest, because it represents a homogeneous racial colony<sup>15</sup> that has successfully maintained its existence for a long period of time.

The permanence of residence on this block is somewhat staggering. More than two-thirds of the families had lived over ten years on the block; more than half had lived there over fifteen years, over 40% had lived there more than twenty years, and

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<sup>15</sup> In 1931, an enumeration of the nationality status of the families in the block was made prior to interview. Of 359 occupied apartments, 344 were occupied by Italian families, the remaining 15 being occupied by 5 Spanish, 2 Greek, 2 Irish, 1 Polish, 1 Jewish, and 2 Isle of Malta families. In two cases nationality was unknown. Ten additional apartments were occupied by groups other than families. Of these, the nationality in seven instances was unknown.

nearly 20% had lived there twenty-five years and over.<sup>16</sup> In 1931 only twenty-nine new families were found to have entered since 1926, when the original survey was made, the remaining one hundred thirty-three families having all been included in the original survey.

Not only was the block a relatively immobile and homogeneous one from the standpoint of permanence of residence and of nationality, but it was a cultural unit with reference to the traditions of its inhabitants, who were practically all Italians of Sicilian birth. The cultural homogeneity of the block was further indicated by the fact that many residents were the married sons and daughters of older dwellers on the block; that sons and daughters often lived in the same buildings as their parents, and that in some buildings several members of a kinship group resided, creating a solidarity and intimacy of living almost characteristic of the Sicilian village and farming communities from which these families had migrated.

A striking feature of the block was its almost uniform "dead level" with reference to social status. The majority of the fathers were day laborers, occupied either at pick or shovel, as longshoremen, or in building construction. A few were garment factory laborers; a number were petty merchants, maintaining small stores and push-carts, and but 15% were skilled and semi-skilled mechanics. Not a single professional, and hardly a white collar worker lived on the block.

The religion was predominantly Roman Catholic. During the period this block was occupied by its present residents, a large yellow-brick church was erected on an adjacent corner.

Tyler Street was a community where Old World traits, sentiments and traditions persisted. Residents came to the block where friends and neighbors of the Old World had settled and quickly resumed the habits and ceremonies to which they had been accustomed in the "old country," speaking their own dialects and holding church fiestas and Saints' Day celebrations in the best Old World tradition.

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<sup>16</sup> The actual figures were, under one year, 5; up to five years, 24; up to ten years, 16; up to fifteen years, 22; up to twenty years, 30; 20 years and over, 65 families.



Their societies were usually gatherings of men from the towns and provinces of the "old country," formed to continue old friendships and customs. Interests were largely local. There were very few ties with the outside community. Few visitors came to Tyler Street, except insurance agents and people with financial interests in the district. Occasionally a social worker, a nurse, or doctor visited the individual homes.

Jobs depended largely on friends. The majority of men had no interests outside of their jobs, their homes and their fraternal societies. But since not all men belonged to fraternal societies, the chief interest was the home. Most of the residents were illiterate; consequently, only by word of mouth and friendly talk with men on the street did they gather the news and form opinions of the problems of the day.

Table 5, showing the community organization affiliations of Tyler Street parents, illustrates the remarkably narrow social sphere of the average Tyler Street parent. Italian benefit societies ranked foremost among men. These societies, which are primarily sickness and death benefit lodges, have a limited social activity, consisting usually of formal lodge meetings. The de-

TABLE 5

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AFFILIATIONS OF TYLER STREET PARENTS

Community Organization	Fathers				Mothers			
	1926	%	1931	%	1926	%	1931	%
Catholic Church . . . . .	*	—	49	30	*	—	52	30
Benefit Societies—Italian.	138	59	43	26	3	1	2	1
Benefit Societies—Jewish.	1	†	0	—	0	—	0	—
Social Clubs—Italian . . .	0	—	6	3	0	—	0	—
Labor Union . . . . .	20	8	15	9	19	8	0	—
Local Political Club . . . .	31	13	6	3	0	—	0	—
Settlement House . . . . .	0	—	0	—	3	1	1	1
Parent-Teachers Association . . . . .	0	—	0	—	3	1	0	—
No organization interest.	*		52	31	*		93	54
Total number of parents reporting . . . . .	234		166		242		172	

\* Not reported, 1926.

† Less than 1%.

pression decreased lodge membership among men from 59% to 26%. A few fathers belonged to purely social clubs.

The depression, which sharply reduced the employment of mothers, eliminated entirely their membership in labor unions. Aside from death and work protection, the only other outstanding institutional affiliation was the Catholic Church, on which no membership data were available for 1926. In 1931, a little less than one-third of the parents claimed Catholic Church membership.

The political disenfranchisement of the group was significantly indicated in the small numbers who took an interest in political activities. The membership in the local political club dwindled from 13% in 1926 to 3% in 1931. Membership in more idealistic civic organizations without immediate utilitarian purposes was practically nil. There were no recorded members of Parent-Teachers' Associations and only one mother attended a settlement house.

Table 5 illustrates the striking limitation of experience of the Italian mother of this group. Generally speaking, the church on the corner and her own home were the two single social interests.

In short, the generalization may be made that the Italian immigrant parent of this group had social contacts of a purely utilitarian nature. He sought both benefit protection, and, in a lesser degree, work protection and political opportunity. Cultural and civic organization interests were foreign to him.

### Modification of Old World Traits

Old World traditions were modified by new ideas brought into the home by school children and by occupational differences between parent and child. In most cases children, although attached to the family, were anxious to move away as soon as they were financially able to do so.

Secondary groups, such as clubs, societies and associations contributed a certain amount of the new culture, occasionally offering speakers from outside of the community. Newspapers brought some outside interests into the home.

### The Conflict of Older and Younger Generations

Old World patterns persisted among the parents, however, and led to inevitable conflict with the children, who sought to disentangle themselves from the cultural and vocational interests of the parent group. Children rebelled against the restraints and restrictions imposed upon them. They developed a deep sense of shame and inferiority because of their origin and tried to conceal their Sicilian birth. Ashamed of the old houses, the congestion, and the lack of personal privacy, children put pressure upon the parents to move from the block.

Many parents, attached to the block and its associations, could not understand these new ideas. They could not see why children were so eager to spend money instead of saving it, and why they were not willing to work as hard as the parents. Children, they thought, were too fond of good times and of commercial recreations.

Many of the women did not visit or leave the district more than a few times a year, and when they did, they went to visit relatives having the same ideas and customs.

Christenings, weddings, and funerals, because of the attendant ceremony, color, and music, formed the social life of the neighborhood.

Young people were ashamed to entertain their friends at home because of lack of space and the unattractiveness of the block. Young men met at their clubs or cafes. Young girls had no social life at all; they remained at home most of the time until they were married. Arrangements for marriage in the past had been made by parents, but with girls working in factories and going to movies, they preferred to make their own selections of partners.

Dress was a most important consideration to boys, who worried as much about clothes as did girls. In fact, as boys went about more, it was more important for them to look well dressed. It was remarkable to see such sleek-looking and well-dressed young men coming out of overcrowded homes where there seemed hardly room enough to hang clothes.

Many of the older boys, unwilling to follow the parental vocation with its hard physical labor, and in order to appear well-dressed and have money in their pockets, undertook illegitimate means of earning a living. Most of them had neither the brains nor the persistence to work or to go to school and found a shortcut to financial success through crime, selling drugs, bootlegging, or by participating in other rackets.

### Adult Anti-Social Behavior

The official picture of adult delinquency in the Tyler Street block was derived from a patient scanning of court dockets. During 1926, forty-seven adults claiming residence in this block, were arrested. The charges ranged from simple violations of the Sanitary Code to severe anti-social behavior, such as burglary, robbery, and homicide. In addition, four adolescents between the ages of sixteen and twenty years, were arrested. Among children under sixteen, there were sixteen Children's Court and Bureau of Attendance arraignments. Thus, in 1926, there was a total of 67 official contacts between residents of this block and police, courts, and the Bureau of Attendance of the Board of Education.

Four felony arrests were made, one each for homicide, involuntary homicide, robbery and burglary; and two arrests for serious misdemeanors, one each for assault and carrying a dangerous weapon. There were two arrests for petty larceny, one for operating a policy game, and eleven for unspecified disorderly conduct. In all, there were twenty arrests on criminal charges. In addition, there were twenty-eight summonses for minor offenses of a non-criminal character; ten for violations of corporation ordinances, seventeen for violations of the Sanitary Code, and one for cruelty to animals.

Serious charges bulked 37% and minor charges 63%. Tyler Street stands out, therefore, as a block in which crime was a serious problem. In only one respect did the block stand well above average, and that was in its freedom from commercialized prostitution. From 1926 to 1931, not a single vice arrest had been made, nor was there unofficial evidence of prostitution. The ab-

sence of prostitution is to be regarded as an evidence of the solidarity of home ties, and the solidarity of the social structure of the block.

The residents of the block were not insensible to its reputation as a crime spot. Sealed lips and significant shrugs usually met the questions of investigators, and answers given were so vague as to be of little or no use for statistical purposes. Only three families acknowledged themselves as having been victims of criminality, one of robbery, one of shooting, and one of murder; but many families spoke vehemently of the criminality of the area, 37 out of 170 families making specific reference thereto.

There was, however, a strong tendency to regard the block as having become quieter in recent years. Among those questioned, some sensibly pointed to the loss of population as a source of lessened disorder.

There was considerable resentment over the close surveillance kept upon the block by plainclothes detectives who were said to be constantly patrolling and breaking up groups of young men hanging around on street corners. It was pointed out that there was less gang behavior and that whereas petty thievery continued, the gang members did not take their loot home but, instead, pawned it.

The block was said to have been formerly the location for large gambling establishments wherein large sums of money changed hands. The old-time gangsters had moved away; some were rich and some were in jail.

Murders which were said to have happened every week formerly were, at the time of survey, infrequent. In 1931 one murder occurred, that of an undertaker who was found strangled and stabbed eleven times. The neighborhood impression was that the murder was an act of vengeance.

One informant stated that a cousin, an insurance man, had been held up on the block and had been struck over the head.

At No. 23, a Jew who hoarded old gold was killed. In No. 34, a man was killed not long before the second survey.

Intimidation was used by racketeers in one instance in the case of a peddler who bought his goods from the wrong truckman.

Gasoline was poured over his push-cart and his products were thus destroyed.

A problem created by the depression was the influx of homeless men and vagrants into the block through the establishment of a soup kitchen at a neighboring settlement house. A visiting teacher reported that this led to the molesting of girls on their way home from school.

A young man, aged 26, member of a family that had resided for 28 years on the block, stated that many of the residents had been at both the New York State Reformatory and at Sing Sing Prison, and that many of the young men of his own age were interested in racketeering, with easy money as their goal. A younger brother indicated that it was necessary on this block to belong to some kind of gang, either a good gang or a bad gang, because if one did not join either, the bad gang would bring pressure on one to become a member and would retaliate if he refused.

Objectionable speakeasies and cafes existed on the block, but these were frequented primarily by adults.

The effect of the generally prevalent adult criminal pattern in this block upon the adolescent group was rarely referred to directly, but the fear of bad associations and the dangers of idleness were uppermost in the minds of parents. A common report was that boys got into serious trouble when they were unemployed. There was some evidence that certain boys who had been quite troublesome between the ages of 14 and 18 later quieted down and became fairly regular workers.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE CHILD

#### Education

**D**ESPITE the wealth of educational opportunities in New York City, the Tyler Street block was an urban island, untouched, in large part, by the influences of technical and professional education. The great majority of children on this block went to work at the earliest possible age, and reached no more than an upper elementary school grade. This was a static condition that bore no relationship to either prosperity or depression.

#### School Attendance by Age Groups

From among a large group below elementary school age, only a few attended kindergartens or nurseries; the remainder played on the streets and in the hallways, while the mothers were away at work or sewing at home, too busy to supervise the children.

The proportion of children in attendance at nursery schools and kindergartens rose from roughly one-quarter of the pre-school child population on the block in 1926, to 40% in 1931.<sup>1</sup>

Between the ages of six and seventeen, inclusive, the majority of the boys were in public and parochial elementary schools—228 of 313 boys in 1926 and 184 of 270 in 1931. In the six to fourteen year group, 215 boys of 257 in 1926 and 178 out of 221 in 1931 were elementary school pupils. A small proportion of boys up to the age of fourteen had completed their compulsory educa-

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<sup>1</sup>The child population under six years of age declined from 1926 to 1931 more sharply than did any other age group—the drop being from 141 children, or 28% of the total child group in 1926, to 59 children, or 16% of the total child group in 1931. Despite this loss in population, the number of children in nurseries and kindergartens dropped only from 34 to 24.

tion, and of these, roughly one-half had gone on to high school; the other half were attending continuation school and presumably working. Only 14 boys each in 1926 and 1931 went on to high school, but the loss of boy population indicated a substantial gain for secondary education in this block during the elapsed five year period. Five boys in 1926 and 3 in 1931 attended full time day vocational schools. Attending college were 2 boys in 1926 and 1 in 1931. The great majority of boys from 15 to 21 years were out of school—97 of 118 in 1926 and 67 of 95 in 1931. The drop from 82% to 70%, an effect of the depression, represented an increased proportion of older boys in school, during 1931.

### School Retardation and Intelligence Levels

An examination of school records disclosed a marked degree of failure among Tyler Street children. In comparison with the city-wide elementary school population, a proportionately small group of Tyler Street boys were in advance of their grade, and a proportionately large group were over age for their grade; the age-grade relation being determined on the basis of normal progression of one grade a year from the age of six onward. Thus, only 9% of Tyler Street boys were accelerated as against 33.8% of public school pupils, and 40% were over age in contrast with 21.4% of public school pupils.

Parents and children alike claimed that school failure was a result of language handicap. A large proportion of all children on this block entered public school speaking and understanding only Italian, and their primary school education was, therefore, really an education in a foreign tongue. Without minimizing the influence of language handicap upon school failure among this group of children, retardation did not decrease as English language facility was acquired but, on the contrary, the proportion of retarded children increased from the primary to the grammar grades, 27% having been retarded in grades 1-4, 47% in grades 5-6, and 52% in grades 7-8.

The increase in retardation among older pupils was probably indicative of mental limitation, rather than of language difficulty.



This explanation is given some support by the results of group intelligence tests given to a portion of this group of children. Intelligence quotients were available on 48 boys, of whom only six represented selected cases, consisting of ungraded class children, whose I Q's fell in the 60 to 69 decile. The remaining 42 cases may be regarded as a random sampling of the entire boy population of the block. Eliminating the group of mental defectives, the median I Q of the remaining group was 82—the range being from 66 to 119, with a marked skewing toward the lower end of the curve.<sup>2</sup>

While many of these children may have had motor capacities and vocational aptitudes of a quality not measured by the verbal tests employed in these ratings, their achievements on this type of test clearly indicated their inaptitude for the academic training given in the usual school curriculum.

School failure, regardless of its causes, had many significant sociological resultants among children on this block, creating both teaching and disciplinary problems. Children discouraged by school failure played truant, or became inattentive and troublesome in school. This loss of interest undoubtedly bore a direct relationship to the rush for working papers at the earliest possible opportunity.

From the standpoint of cultural background the retardation was significant, since every child who was over age had less chance of completing even the minimum elementary school course.

It is obvious from these facts that a marked change in curriculum was in order for children of the type here under discussion.

### Higher Education

Boys who entered high school were frequently those who had made rapid advancement, and were thus too immature for in-

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<sup>2</sup>In a random sampling of an unlimited number of cases, it would be expected that 50% of the IQ's would fall above 100, and 50% below 100. Within this group of cases, however, less than 10% were among the high average and superior levels of intelligence; 60% were of low average intelligence, with intelligence quotients between 80 and 100; and 31% were mentally deficient, or borderline, in intelligence.

dustry upon completion of elementary school work. Since there was no tradition of higher education on this block, the establishment of such a tradition involved slow person-to-person imitation. (Table 6, Vocational and Educational Ambitions of Tyler Street Boys, 1931.)

In the 1926 survey, a group of college and advanced high school boys were following in the foot-steps of the oldest member of the group, who was attending the University of Syracuse, on a scholarship awarded for outstanding character and academic achievement. This boy, in turn, had been influenced by a neighborhood druggist, a man of superior standards, who had since returned to Italy.

No such nucleus of boys interested in higher education was found during the 1931 survey. The depression, while keeping boys in secondary school longer, practically wiped out all possibilities of college careers for those in secondary school.

Only 8 boys in 1926 and 4 in 1931 took advantage of vocational training, either day or night,—illustrating vividly the lack of

TABLE 6  
VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL AMBITIONS OF TYLER STREET  
BOYS, 1931

	<i>Under 10 Years</i>	<i>Ages 10-14 Years</i>	<i>Ages 15-20 Years</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Educational</i>				
Legal school requirements only . . . . .	55	46	31	132
High school . . . . .	2	4	2	8
College . . . . .	—	2	—	2
<i>Vocational</i>				
Commercial . . . . .	—	3	3	6
Trade . . . . .	1	—	3	4
Professional . . . . .	1	3	8	12
<i>Cultural</i>				
Occupational . . . . .	—	1	2	3
<i>Occupational</i>				
Trade . . . . .	1	9	22	32
Other . . . . .	—	2	2	4
<hr/>				
Totals . . . . .	60	70	73	203
Not reported . . . . .	66	38	26	130
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Total Number of Boys . . . . .	126	108	99	333

educational foresight among residents of this block. Printing, the electrical trades, and commercial course, were the chosen occupations during both survey years. Night school facilities were practically unused,—only two boys attended night elementary school in 1926 and one in 1931. Not a single boy attended evening high school.

### Continuation Schools

Continuation schools are not primarily intended for trade training, but generally provide only try-out courses, where boys and girls may discover aptitudes and interests by shifting from one trade class to another. Less resentment toward continuation schools was expressed in 1931 than during 1926, and it would appear that they were winning a slow and reluctant acceptance in the community. Despite the considerable drop in boys of continuation school age during the five year period, the number reported as attending increased from 17 in 1926 to 21 in 1931.

Among nine expressions of opinion given on the value of continuation school in 1926, four were favorable, one neutral, and four unfavorable. The favorable responses stressed the vocational assistance given by the course followed, whereas the unfavorable responses reiterated the complaint that employers objected to continuation schools, and that, as a result, attendance militated against obtaining worthwhile positions. One boy who had refused to attend continuation school pounded his fist on the table and said: "I simply would not go to continuation school, because it interferes with jobs. No boss wants to be bothered with boys who go to continuation school, and no boy who goes to continuation school can earn enough money to help his family."

Another boy, however, stated:

My report card from the printing class in continuation school shows "A" in everything. I am learning printing at a printing company and am in a printing class, and I think I am learning a great deal from this.

An attempt was made during the re-survey to compare the continuation school course taken with the boy's statement of ambi-

tion and the occupation entered by him. These facts, available on twenty-one cases, disclosed considerable disagreement among the several factors. Whereas the course taken agreed with the ambition in six instances and with the occupation in five instances, disagreements between ambition and course taken numbered six cases and disagreements between course taken and occupation numbered 8 cases. In no case did the course taken, the ambition, and the occupation completely agree, which seemed to indicate some maladjustment in the relating of interests to occupations. These data, of course, represent only a momentary aspect of occupational life, and cannot by any means be regarded as the final picture. Nor, of course, is there any guarantee that the ambitions were related to the capacities of the boys.

TABLE 7

RELATION BETWEEN CONTINUATION SCHOOL COURSE TAKEN,  
AMBITION AND OCCUPATION

<i>Continuation School Course</i>	<i>Ambition</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Mechanics	None	Unemployed
Mechanics	None (Disliked the course)	Employed by father as painter
Mechanics	Auto mechanic	Unemployed
Mechanics	None	Learning clothing pressing
Electrical Shop	Electrician	Push-cart peddler
Electrical Shop	Electrician	Unemployed
Electrical Shop	Electrician	Ice delivery
Electrical Shop	Undecided	Electrical work
Electrical Shop	Undecided	In electrical shop
Electrical Wiring	Not reported	Chandelier polisher
Carpentry	Undecided, father wants him to be a butcher	Butcher's helper for father
Printing	Undecided	Errand boy
Printing	None	Delivery boy
Printing	Printer	Has never been employed
Printing	Undecided	Printer's helper
Printing	Not reported	Printer
Printing	None	Truck helper
Typing	Typing and Bookkeeping	Has never been employed
Typing	Trade or real estate house	Office boy
Commercial Subjects	Undecided	Delivery boy
Art Drawing	Artist	Unemployed (was factory worker)

The continuation school courses taken by these twenty-one boys included mechanics, electrical work, electrical wiring, carpentry, printing, typing, commercial subjects, and art drawing. The actual data descriptive of the relation between ambition, occupation and continuation school course, are given in Table 7, Relation Between Continuation School Course Taken, Ambition and Occupation.

### Vocational Guidance

Very little vocational guidance was given to Tyler Street children. There was available no counsel from a guidance counselor. Rarely was a boy advised by a public school teacher with regard to his work career. The general impression gained in 1926 was that most boys derived their vocational interests solely from their families; that boys were early imbued with the idea that they must begin to earn money at the first opportunity, and that whatever education they received must tend toward that end. The re-survey in 1931 indicated that lack of ambition, caused probably by lack of ability, rather than immediate economic necessity interfered with advance vocational planning.

The average Tyler Street boy delayed consideration of his vocational future until he was just leaving or had already left the elementary school. Slightly more than half of the adolescent group formulated their goal in life during the 15-20 year age period. Forty-three percent never formulated a goal. Among the younger boys, the concept of a future was still more vague, and was given consideration by only a third of the group. Among children under 10, as might be expected, less than 10% expressed ideas of a goal in adulthood. Parents rarely expressed hopes or ambitions for their children. Among the parents of 333 boys, parents of only 16 had formulated ambitions for them!

The goals set varied from the fantastic and unattainable to the sober and practicable. Education as an end in itself was subordinated to vocational education:—high school and college training were set as a goal in ten instances, as compared with twenty-two choices of commercial, trade or professional training. Vocational education, in turn, was subordinated to choices of semi-skilled and skilled trades. In 132 instances out of 203 boys

of all ages who expressed an educational or vocational goal, completion of compulsory education in elementary school was the only goal visualized. These 132 children reported no vocational choice of any kind.

Twelve boys set professional goals such as law, medicine, priesthood, teaching, engineering, writing, music and art. Mechanical trades, including auto mechanics, pattern-making, electricity, printing and aviation mechanics, were the goal for twenty-three boys, whereas independent tradesmen's callings, such as barber, butcher, presser and baker, attracted four. The prize ring had four aspirants. Two small boys hoped to become firemen.

Fantasy played but a small part in these dreams of success. The boys preferring professions were generally those rated as bright and successful in their studies, although one dull boy wished to be a priest, and one boy who could not draw wished to be an artist.

The goals represented a rejection of the manual labor status of the parents of this group. Many boys were of course destined to become machine tenders and manual laborers, but it is significant that none of them voluntarily expressed a desire for such work.

### Attitudes Toward School

An attempt was made to obtain a direct measure of attitudes toward school during the 1931 re-survey. Of 59 attitudes toward school obtained from boys of all ages, (See Table 8, "Favorable and Unfavorable Attitudes Toward School Among Tyler Street

TABLE 8

FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL OF TYLER STREET BOYS, CLASSIFIED BY AGE GROUPS

<i>Attitudes</i>	<i>Ages</i>			<i>Total Number</i>
	<i>Under 10 Number</i>	<i>10-14 Number</i>	<i>15-20 Number</i>	
Favorable .....	11	11	5	27
Unfavorable .....	7	14	11	32
Totals .....	18	25	16	59

Boys, Classified by Age Groups), 32 were unfavorable and 27 were favorable. The trend was especially unfavorable in the older age group.

A tabulation of causes of unfavorable school attitudes among thirty-two boys ranked unwise discipline (7 cases) and non-promotion (5 cases) as the most frequent specific sources of unfavorable attitudes. In a large proportion of instances (10 cases) the given attitude was a general, unanalyzed one. The most characteristic behavior reactions of unfavorable attitudes were avoidance (truancy, 6 cases) and rebellion (behavior problem, 5 cases).

Corporal punishment, although forbidden by the Board of Education, was still said to be used by teachers in this community, and four of the seven instances of reported unwise discipline involved teachers who were accused of striking pupils. Among these was a thirteen year old boy, a behavior problem, who, according to his parents' version, was demoted for striking back at a teacher who hit him.

Among older boys the active resentment toward school was more violent than among younger children, who spoke of a "dislike" for school. The school attitudes or school behavior of eleven former school boys between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two are indicated as follows:

TABLE 8a

## ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL OF FORMER TYLER STREET SCHOOL BOYS

<i>Ages</i>	<i>Attitudes</i>
22	Unemployed, but rejected idea of trade school while idle.
19	Rejected parents' wish that he attend trade school for a certain trade while idle.
18	Graduated elementary at 13½ but remained in high school only one term, just long enough to obtain working papers. Disliked high school.
15	Truancy and school thefts, quarreled with teacher.
15	Truant. Has been in Probationary and Truant Schools. Will go to work as soon as he can.
18	Wanted to be movie star in Hollywood. Doesn't think knowledge leads to income. Began school at 8½. Disliked it.
14	Truant and delinquent.
19	When in school, disliked it. Twice committed to N. Y. Truant School.
16	Disliked Continuation School and was anxious to leave.
17	Was a truant at 14 and committed to Catholic Protectory.

The favorable attitudes gave no particular clues as to the reasons for the fondness for school, save that among boys fifteen years and over, interest in school was definitely related to careers.

Teachers' ratings of Tyler Street boys showed them to be average in behavior, but somewhat less than average in learning ability. Children under ten were generally better pupils, both scholastically and in behavior, than those between ten and fourteen, but the loss among older pupils was greater in learning ability than in behavior. These differences were not only in terms of averages, but were progressive throughout the ten to fourteen year group, as evidenced by the number whose ratings in conduct and proficiency retrogressed during that age period.<sup>3</sup>

There was a most significant agreement among indices of school success, such as boys' attitudes towards school, conduct ratings, I. Q's, scholastic records, and retardation. Every index showed a progressive age decline in capacity and interest in dealing with the traditional materials of the public school curriculum; so that by the time boys were fourteen or fifteen years old, a large proportion of them were retarded, disinterested and rebellious.

### Parental Attitudes Toward Education

No quantitative measure of parent attitudes toward education was obtained in the earlier survey, therefore a comparison for the

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<sup>3</sup> Ratings were obtainable for only a fraction of the pupils. Among 103 rated for proficiency, B and C ratings were achieved by children under 10, and children aged 10-14 in almost equal percentages; 56% and 54%, B, and 21 and 22 percent, C. However, the younger groups were favored in A ratings, and in the infrequency of D ratings, A's having been awarded to 13 percent of those under 10, and to but 4 percent of those over, while D ratings were given to ten percent under ten, and to 20 percent over.

Conduct ratings showed a tendency toward lower ratings with increased age. In the younger group, ratings were: A, 43 percent; B, 51 percent; C, 5 percent; D, one percent. Among those ages 10-14 years, the conduct ratings were: A, 38 percent; B, 48 percent; C, 10 percent; D, 4 percent.

Attendance records were obtained on 103 pupils. These showed relatively good attendance for both age groups. Sixty-three had rare absence, twenty-four had infrequent absence, and sixteen had frequent absence. However, the percentage of attendance was distinctly lower than for New York City pupils as a whole.



two survey years is not possible. In 1931, however, twenty-three parents made articulate statements of attitude toward education, of which eight were unfavorable and fifteen were favorable. The unfavorable attitudes were primarily among parents of boys fifteen years and over, and were for three distinctly different reasons:—doubt of the child's capacity for further education, discontent with the standards of American teaching, and skepticism over the value of education in helping children find work. Thus, one father was shocked that his boy of nineteen, who had reached the seventh grade, was unable to find employment in 1931, while illiterate foreigners found work. The favorable parental attitudes were practically all tied up with faith in education as a means of success and hope for their children's future in professional careers and trades. Three parents favored college educations for their children, and two favored specific professional careers.

### Special Education

Religious and cultural education both suffered markedly during the depression. Whereas in 1926 religious instruction was received by nineteen boys, only one boy received religious instruction in 1931. Thirteen children received musical and art instruction in 1926, but only five received such instruction in 1931. The decrease in musical education was concomitant with the increase in the number of radios in the block but, it is impossible to determine whether this was a causal relationship, or whether the depression itself was the potent cause. Whatever the cause of the drop in musical education, it tended to eliminate one significant source of escape from hum-drum routine for boys in this block. The case histories gave evidence of marked musical capacity among a number of children, and this capacity was sometimes the basis for a livelihood.

The only other source of education, the public library, was used by forty-one boys in 1926, most of whom were between the ages of ten and fourteen. The reasons given for the negligible use of library facilities were illuminating; mothers objected to paying fines for over-due library books and to paying for re-

placement and repair on books that were handled roughly in the home. In 1931 only three boys were listed as attending public libraries.

### Health of Tyler Street Boys

In the absence of adequate periodic medical examinations, only the sketchiest picture can be given of the health of boys on this block, based on public school physical examinations which were conducted at irregular intervals.<sup>4</sup> Although these physical examinations were superficial surveys of outstanding, obvious defects, children of this age group are relatively free from toxic and degenerative illnesses. Thus, excluding the possibility of obscure organic ailments, such as incipient tuberculosis and cardiac ailments, the records are a gauge of the remediable defects of children in this block.

Among the 122 school boys studied, 358 defects were discovered, an average of three defects per child. Thirty-eight boys had four or more physical defects, thirty-seven had three, twenty-three had two, and sixteen had one, and only eight were free from physical defect. The majority of the children were afflicted with carious teeth, enlarged tonsils and defective nutrition. Ninety-one or seventy-four percent had dental caries, seventy-nine, or sixty-five percent had enlarged tonsils, and sixty-eight or fifty-five percent suffered from malnutrition. Sixty-four boys had defective nasal breathing, and thirty-two had defective vision. The remaining deficiencies were: hard of hearing, 13; lung ailment, 3; cardiac ailment, 2; glandular deficiency, 2; speech defect, 1; orthopedic defect, 1; anemia, 1.

These findings indicate that a majority of the children on this slum block were handicapped by remediable physical disabilities. These physical handicaps were probably related to school failure. An improvement in health was noted on the records of only 33, or 27%, of the children; which fact is an indication of the in-

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<sup>4</sup> This material was not obtained during the earlier survey, and therefore, no comparison was possible as to the health of these boys at the two successive year levels. However, the school physical examinations data secured in 1931 covered, for those boys on whom records were available, the entire school period from the age of entrance until the age of final discharge.

adequacy of the existing type of public school medical inspection.<sup>5</sup>

Insofar as could be gathered from statements by parents, times of acute illness seemed to be the only occasion for family concern over remedial facilities. Clinics were used occasionally, but more often a private physician was called. In a few cases the doctor was one employed by the father's lodge.

### Health Habits

There was a lack of home supervision over boys' health habits. Lunches were often prepared by the delicatessen keeper and eaten desultorily. Sleeping hours were irregular and houses were unsanitary. Practically all families used the public bath house during the summer, but only a few used them during the winter. Those who could afford it, perhaps a half dozen, went to private baths, paying 30 cents a bath, because they found the public baths too cold. In 1926, many families stated that they did not take baths in the winter time because they could not heat enough water on their gas stoves (as they had neither running hot water nor boilers) to provide baths for the family. The older boys who were earning some money said they used the Turkish baths on Henry Street at least two or three times a week.

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<sup>5</sup> A theoretical forward step was established recently in New York City with the provision of a fairly rigid medical examination as a basis for employment certification. If the school medical inspections resulted in adequate improvement, the health standards at the point of certification would have meaning; but the evidence is that the standards are not adhered to because of the sheer impossibility of creating almost over-night improvements in children whose health has been consistently neglected up to the point of certification.

The struggle of the school authorities to pull children over the health hurdle, to qualify them for jobs, and the probable laxness that ensues in such a difficult situation may be surmised from the following excerpt from an official Board of Education Report:

"It has been shown that a great number of . . . employed minors, although but recently certified as physically fit to enter upon employment as the result of physical examination at the borough offices of the Department of Health, were, none the less, not physically fit."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Thirty-first Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, to the Board of Education of the City of New York, 1929—p. 241.

Between 1926 and 1931 bathing facilities in the home increased appreciably. As indicated elsewhere in this volume, the number of families having hot water rose from 5% in 1926 to 50% in 1931. Eleven families had bath tubs in 1931, whereas there were none in 1926.

### Employment

Among boys of the type found on Tyler Street, the period of initiation into employment seemed to be the most difficult and chaotic phase of their lives. No established standards helped them to determine the type of work to follow, nor the rate of pay which they might legitimately expect at a given age. Thus many difficulties arose between the parents and the boys, which resulted in quarrels over the amount of money brought home.

There were difficulties with employers and many periods of unemployment during which time the boys became victims of careless habits and of delinquency. The main facts which stood out in regard to the Tyler Street group during the 1926 survey were:

1. Practically all the boys, with a few exceptions, began work as soon as they were legally permitted to do so.

2. Previous to the legal working age many boys were engaged during their free hours in various street trades. A large number helped in the garment work which was taken into the home.

3. In selecting work, the boys were not inclined to do the type of work done by their fathers.

4. The choice of work was determined chiefly by the possible earnings.

5. Unemployment for shorter or longer periods was very prevalent.

With minor modifications, these findings were also applicable to the depression year, 1931.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>The variations from prosperity year 1926 to depression year 1931 among Tyler Street working boys were:

- a. A decrease in the number employed during night hours, but a large increase in boys, ages 10 to 14, employed at shoe shining.
- b. A decrease in the proportion of skilled and semi-skilled boy workers.
- c. A marked increase in the proportion of boys who were unemployed at the time of survey.

## Occupations of Fathers and Sons

Tyler Street boys did not follow the parental bent in choice of occupations.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the majority of fathers were unskilled laborers, 70% in 1926 and 53% in 1931, most of their sons were skilled and semi-skilled mechanics, 59% in 1926 and 40% in 1931. Among the boys, 29% in 1926 and 25% in 1931 were unskilled laborers. Ten percent of parents in 1926 and 11% in 1931 were in skilled and semi-skilled trades. (Table 9, Jobs held by Tyler Street Boys, 1926 and 1931.)

A small number of boys, employed as printers' helpers, plumbers' apprentices, florists and crystal cutters, were definitely in trades with a future in 1926. In 1931 certain skilled lines were less represented but other lines, such as upholstering, platinum work, marble cutting, painting and clothing cutting, took their places. More boys were engaged in jobs with a future in 1926 than in 1931.

In the absence of an actual job analysis, it was difficult to determine the proportion of boys employed at jobs with opportunity for advancement but a rough estimate, as seen in Table 10, "Jobs With and Without Opportunity for Advancement Held by Tyler Street Boys, 1926 and 1931", indicated that the majority of them were in jobs that offered a possible future, more, however, in 1926 than in 1931. It is impossible to determine whether future advancement or immediate salary attracted the boys to these jobs. In 1926, the jobs offering opportunity were definitely the better paying ones. Thus, of 57 jobs with a future in 1926, 29 paid between \$16.00 and \$40.00 a week.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Major occupational classifications of boys in 1926 and 1931 were: (1926 figures given first)—Professional preparation, 3, 0; Skilled trade, 22, 13; Semi-skilled trade, 20, 10; Office and Sales, 5, 8; Unskilled labor, 19, 15; Military forces, 0, 1; unemployed, 0, 10.

<sup>9</sup> In 1926 it was stated: "The boys are guided more by the prospect of immediate earnings than by anything else. In this the pressure brought upon them by their parents is very great. As brought out in conversation in one home after another, practically all the fathers and mothers feel that the boys do not earn as much as they are worth."

TABLE 9  
JOBS HELD BY TYLER STREET BOYS, 1926 AND 1931

Type of Job	Ages							
	Totals		14-15 Years		16-17 Years		18 Years and Over	
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>Profession:</i>								
Junior draftsman . . . . .	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Musician . . . . .	2	..	..	..	1	..	1	..
<i>Skilled Trade:</i>								
Baker's helper . . . . .	5	1	..	..	3	1	2	..
Barber . . . . .	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Barber's helper . . . . .	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Butcher . . . . .	2	..	..	..	2	..	..	..
Electrician's helper ..	4	2	..	..	3	..	1	2
Florist's helper . . . . .	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Jeweler's apprentice ..	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..
Machinist's helper ...	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Marble cutter . . . . .	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..
Plumber's helper ....	2	1	..	..	1	..	1	1
Presser . . . . .	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Printer's apprentice ..	4	4	1	..	1	2	2	2
Upholsterer . . . . .	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
Painter . . . . .	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..
Cutter . . . . .	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
<i>Semi-skilled Occupation:</i>								
Factory operative ....	18	6	..	..	8	1	10	5
Chauffeur . . . . .	2	..	..	..	..	..	2	..
Truck driver . . . . .	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
Truck helper . . . . .	..	3	..	..	..	1	..	2
<i>Clerical</i> . . . . .	3	7	..	..	1	..	2	7
<i>Store Salesman</i> . . . . .	2	1	..	..	..	..	2	1
<i>Unskilled Labor:</i>								
Factory operative ...	7	3	1	..	2	..	4	3
Errand boy . . . . .	6	7	3	1	2	3	1	3
Laborer . . . . .	2	3	..	..	..	..	2	3
Orderly . . . . .	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Push cart seller ....	1	1	..	..	1	..	..	1
Restaurant helper ...	2	..	..	..	1	..	1	..
News-stand helper ..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
<i>United States Marines</i> ..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
<i>Unemployed</i> . . . . .	..	10	..	..	..	3	..	7
<i>Totals</i> . . . . .	69	57	5	1	30	14	34	42

TABLE 10

JOBS WITH AND WITHOUT OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT HELD BY TYLER STREET BOYS, 1926 AND 1931

	Totals						Salaries						Not Known	
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	\$7-10	\$11-15	\$16-22	\$30-40	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>Street Trades, Etc.:</i>														
Age 16 and under	8	7	8	7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Age 17 and over	1	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	1
<i>Blind Alley Jobs:</i>														
Age 16 and under	1	4	..	1	1	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Age 17 and over	8	2	..	..	..	..	4	1	4	1	..	..	..	..
<i>Opportunity Offered:</i>														
Age 16 and under	14	2	6	..	2	..	5	..	1	..	..	..	..	2
Age 17 and over	43	37	2	..	3	13	9	10	27	6	1	1	1	7
Doubtful	7	3	..	1	..	1	2	..	5	..	..	..	..	1
Totals	82	57	16	9	6	16	20	11	38	8	1	1	1	12

In 1931, however, salaries of boys had dropped so low that jobs with opportunity were not better than those without opportunity. Despite this fact, 39 of 57 boys employed in 1931 clung to jobs with opportunity.

This shift from an unskilled to a skilled status was a most significant index of the superior adjustment of the second generation to the industrial opportunities of the country. The reasons therefor are necessarily obscure, but there was evidence that parents encouraged their children to do work of a higher social standard than their own. It should, however, be borne in mind that the jobs held during this period were not necessarily the jobs held in later life, and any comparison between the two generation groups must await the achievement of a final industrial status among the second generation.

### Manner of Obtaining Employment

Methods of obtaining employment may be properly classified into two types, personal and impersonal.

The personal method involves direct solicitation of employment and utilizes family friendships, acquaintances, etc. Under this general heading, too, is the personal canvass from shop to shop and office to office, usually in response to a "Boy Wanted" sign on the door.

The impersonal method involves the use of newspaper classified ads and public and commercial employment agencies.

Personal job hunting was the usual method of Tyler Street boys. Only 4 of 52 in 1926 and 7 of 35 in 1931 obtained employment through the newspapers or employment agencies. Of the remainder, 24 of 48 in 1926 and 16 of 28 in 1931 obtained jobs through friends and relatives. In 1926, boys regarded as inadequate jobs suggested by the continuation schools which paid only from \$10.00 to \$15.00 per week.

There were practically no instances of school or parental guidance in the selection of work particularly adapted to the capacity of the individual. This situation has been discussed in greater detail in the section on education.



## Employment of School Boys

Not as important as the employment problem of the older boys, yet still worth consideration, were the work duties of young school boys during their free time. Table II, "Part Time Em-

TABLE II

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT OF TYLER STREET SCHOOL BOYS, 1926 AND 1931, ANALYZED IN TIME PERIODS

Type of Work	Totals		Ages 10-14		Ages 15-19	
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>After School and Saturday:</i>						
Newsboy .....	6	4	5	4	1	0
Store .....	5	3	4	1	1	2
Home store .....	6	..	5	0	1	0
Shoe shining .....	3	21	3	20	0	1
Pushcart and fruit-stand .....	4	1	3	0	1	1
Barber shop .....	1	1	1	1	0	0
Totals	25	30	21	26	4	4
<i>Before School:</i>						
Store .....	1	2	1	0	0	2
Peddler's stand (with father) ..	..	3	0	3	0	0
Totals	1	5	1	3	0	2
<i>After and before School:</i>						
Store .....	1	2	1	1	0	1
<i>Saturday Only:</i>						
Unspecified .....	..	2	..	..	..	2
<i>Night Hours, Unspecified Duties:</i>						
To 12 P.M. ....	1	..	0	0	1	0
Early A.M. ....	3	..	1	0	2	0
5 P.M. to 7 A.M. ....	1	..	0	0	1	0
3 P.M. to 12 P.M. ....	1	1	0	0	1	1
12 P.M. to 8 A.M. ....	1	..	0	0	1	0
Totals	7	1	1	0	6	1
<i>Extra Work in Addition to Other Work:</i>						
Father's store .....	1	1	0	0	1	1
Music .....	1	..	0	0	1	0
Boxing .....	1	1	0	1	1	0
Totals	3	2	0	1	3	1
Grand Totals .....	37	42	24	31	13	11

ployment of Tyler Street School Boys, 1926 and 1931, Analyzed in Time Periods," lists the working hours of school boys who had positions paying salaries or who worked for tips.

In 1926, 37 of 148 and in 1931, 42 of 127 school boys, were engaged in definite occupations. Boys between the ages of 10 and 14 who were occupied after school increased from 16% in 1926 to 24% in 1931.<sup>10</sup>

The depression year saw a tremendous increase in the number of 10-14 year old boys shining shoes, from 3 in 1926 to 20 boys in 1931. In 1931 the street-trade group almost entirely dominated the list of school boy occupations, which evidently signifies that the depression brought with it an increase in unsupervised occupations.

It was not possible in 1931 to measure the earnings of boys not engaged in street trades, as push-cart helpers and errand boys for stores, but in 1926, their earnings varied from \$2.00 to \$9.00 a week, including both pay and tips.

As illustrations of the different problems in work for these boys, the following stories from the 1926 survey, given as far as possible in the words of the boys themselves or of their parents, are enlightening:

Errand boy for pearl maker—\$13.00 a week. Got job through *The World*. Saw it among other jobs and went and got it. "I would like to have gone further in school, but my mother said, 'Now you are old enough to work.' Besides I want to help my mother as she sews all night. Now I give her all my money so she will not work any more."

Errand boy for printing concern. Expects to learn the printing trade here. Earns \$13.00 a week. Has a raise every six months. "I like my boss. He is good to me. I like my work. I have been there

<sup>10</sup> It was the impression of the field investigators during the earlier survey that not all the boys engaged in after-school work had been recorded. This conjecture was based on the fact that many of the smaller boys had movie money that their parents could not account for, and also because many of the boys were not in evidence on the home block on Saturdays. Furthermore, many boys were engaged in assisting their mothers in the home garment industry without receiving any definite earnings. From 20 to 30 young boys were observed from time to time carrying large bundles of garments back and forth to the factories, and at least 10 to 15 others were found in the home sewing, helping in finishing, removing bastings, etc.

eight months, and I intend to stay because the boss said he would teach me printing. I found the job myself. I went around looking for work and saw a sign in the window. I am learning printing also at continuation school. I could not go any further in school because I had to go to work, and then it didn't seem to agree with me. I was too attentive to my studies, and used to have headaches at night."

Four boys, the eldest 18, and a sister were found sitting in a cold room with no fire and without money for food, fuel, or the movies. They were without earnings because the eldest brother had lost his job as a plater in a chandelier factory, after a quarrel with the foreman. "The foreman is a kind of cousin of mine. He told us to come to work on time. The day after, my sister and brother who work with me were late, but only a few minutes. The foreman called me down before the others, so I took my brother and sister out of work too. We haven't a dollar in the house. But sometimes you can't help having a fight with the foreman, and something will turn up. I am going to send my brother out to look for a job. I have been looking over the newspapers for a job, and perhaps he will find one. This brother of mine is a hard problem. He has had lots of trouble in getting jobs because he is so fat and lazy, and he refuses to take any responsibility in the house. He sits there and just never has a —— word to say. He refuses to look for work, and refuses to obey." "Why the —— should he worry?" said the sister, joining in the conversation. In reply to a question asking whether he helped her with the work, she answered, "Boys do not help in Italian families. Why the —— should they?" A few days later the elder brother ran after the visitor on the street. "We are all at work again, even the fat one. We went back to the chandelier factory."

A 15 year old boy, who was very tall for his age, got a job as an errand boy through the continuation school, but said he was not going to do this work always. "I am going to make a fortune as a prize fighter. My older brother has made his living this way, and he started me in it. I have won some prizes in some amateur prize fighting." The mother, who was present during the interview, and who had worked hard with her husband helping to run his grocery and macaroni store, and had acquired the ownership of the building in which they lived, said, "It is a shame for a big boy as big as my son to be an errand boy. His \$14.00 a week are scarcely enough to keep him in clothes. He should be doing a real job, but the school

does not get them a real job. I do not want him to do prize fighting, but this is what he seems to want to do. It is America that spoils the boys with too much play."

Frightened, according to his sister, because two of his chums had just been arrested, a boy of 18, who had spent his last two years in gambling, etc., and who would do no work, "begged his father to take him with him on a night job laboring for a contractor."

"I lost my job at a furniture company where I delivered furniture because the company went into bankruptcy," said a 16 year old boy. "I like heavy outdoor work, and I am looking for that kind of a job. I got a job through the continuation school as an errand boy for a can company, but they paid me only \$10.00 a week, and I gave the job up. If I went back to the continuation school they would get me another like that, but what is \$10.00 a week for a boy as big as I am? The kind of job that I want is heavy work. My family needs the money, so I must earn more."

A continuation school boy said he had lost his job two weeks before, and was still looking for another. He had worked in a doll factory, and said the boss did not want boys who went to school.

"I just would not work for a few years after graduating from continuation school," said a boy who was learning to be an electrician. "I am a feeder, and can earn \$35.00 a week. Just now I have been laid off for three weeks because there is no work. I am a member of the union," and he showed his membership card. "Just how long I will be laid off I don't know." Although the boys in the neighborhood knew that this boy was learning to be an electrician, they laughed at the idea, and said, "He is so dumb, he will never learn that trade."

### Leisure Time Activities

Outside of school and employment, is an area of leisure time, some of which is under adult supervision, but much of which is not. Among Tyler Street boys, there was relatively little adult supervision of leisure time.

Type of Recreation	Ages												Totals	
	2-5 Years		6-9 Years		10-14 Years		15-17 Years		18 and Over		Totals		1926	1931
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931		
<i>Home:</i>														
Musical instruments	2	..	8	..	37	..	15	..	21	1	83	1	..	
Games	..	1	..	2	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	5	..	
Reading	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	2	..	..	..	3	..	
Unclassified	..	5	..	5	..	..	..	..	..	..	10	..	..	
<i>Out-door:</i>														
Local playgrounds	2	..	16	3	24	12	5	2	3	3	50	20	..	
Street and yards	43	21	82	70	121	91	36	40	17	20	299	242	..	
Roofs	..	..	..	7	..	9	..	3	..	..	..	19	..	
Wharves and piers	..	..	..	7	..	10	..	6	..	6	..	29	..	
Hall-ways	29	1	59	2	22	..	..	..	..	..	110	3	..	
<i>Un-supervised Clubs:</i>														
Social clubs	..	..	..	..	11	6	1	1	4	5	16	12	..	
<i>Supervised Recreation:</i>														
Church clubs	..	9	..	16	1	25	9	10	11	14	21	74	..	
Settlement house clubs	..	..	..	15	19	19	9	9	6	6	34	49	..	
Public school clubs	..	..	4	..	38	2	13	1	2	..	57	3	..	
Other clubs	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	8	..	9	0	..	
Library	..	..	..	..	..	4	..	4	..	1	0	9	..	
<i>Commercial Recreations:</i>														
Motion pictures	24	1	81	26	144	62	53	37	52	33	354	159	..	
Other theatres	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	11	6	12	6	..	
Dance halls	..	..	..	..	..	..	7	..	18	4	25	4	..	
Pool rooms	..	..	..	..	1	1	7	2	20	18	28	21	..	
Cafes	..	..	..	..	2	..	5	1	12	6	19	7	..	
Spectator sports	..	..	..	..	..	1	17	7	22	13	39	21	..	
Bowling	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	0	1	..	
Swimming	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	0	1	..	
<i>Summer Recreations:</i>														
Camp	2	4	..	5	4	12	1	2	1	2	8	25	..	
Country and shore	..	7	7	8	21	16	11	7	5	7	44	45	..	
Swimming at beaches	..	..	1	3	15	17	3	25	3	35	22	80	..	
Swimming off docks	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	..	..	0	4	..	
Swimming at pools	..	1	..	10	..	28	..	7	..	..	0	46	..	

### Play in the Home

The Tyler Street home was a very unsatisfactory place for child's play. The over-crowding of large families into three and four room apartments left no room for children, and drove them into the street. The older boys and girls were ashamed of the appearance of their homes, of the lack of space, and of the unattractiveness of the entire block; so that young men met at their clubs or at cafes, and young girls had no social life at all until marriage. The home was a center of social life for the young only on ceremonial occasions, such as christenings, weddings and funerals.

Very few young children participated in home play. In a few homes, in 1931, boys were found playing picture games in the evenings. Of the eighteen children reported as engaging in home play, 3 did reading, 5 played games, and 10 engaged in miscellaneous play.

Surprisingly, among these families of otherwise obvious poverty, in 1926, 83, or one-sixth of the total number of boys, representing perhaps thirty families out of 248, had access to musical instruments. By 1931 this proportion had increased tremendously; among 178 families tabulated, only 56 were without musical instruments, the remainder having over 141 instruments, including 62 phonographs and 49 radios.

### Street Play

The Tyler Street block was ill adapted for play purposes because of the open-air market, whose push-carts occupied almost the entire available play space. Parents on this block stressed the lack of play space for their children almost as much as they deplored their lack of income. If children played on the street, they bumped into the push-cart men; or if they played ball, they broke windows. Children up to the age of ten, or thereabouts, therefore, played on the side-walks and in hall-ways, rather than in the street itself. Such street play as there was consisted of hand-ball games among the older fellows, building fires, and crap shooting, in which boys from twelve to fifteen years old

participated. As many as five or six crap games were in progress at one time in front of doorways. A few boys with roller skates found skating more convenient on Market Street, where there was greater area and less push-cart traffic. After school hours and after the evening meal, groups of boys were to be seen standing around idling.

### Observations on Street Play

Observations made by student observers during eight separate observation periods showed that a small number of children used Tyler Street for play. These observations, made on a mild autumn day, in fair weather, with the temperature between fifty and sixty degrees, disclosed at no time more than twelve boys on the street. Eighteen groups were observed engaging in work, idling, games, non-competitive group play, and dangerous or undesirable forms of play. Practically none of the play involved team or game activities, and in seven of the eighteen groups the play was definitely dangerous or undesirable. Young boys played such games as horse, hide and seek, hand ball and pictures, in hallways. The suitability of halls as play spots may be judged from their description in the section dealing with housing, where they are characterized as being dirty, poorly ventilated, and filled with the foul odors of defective plumbing.

### Summer Recreation

The major summer interest of Tyler Street boys was swimming. During 1931, 80 reported swimming at beaches, 43 swam at the baths, 4 admitted swimming off the docks, and 3 younger boys went swimming in the pool surrounding the Statue of Civic Virtue, in City Hall Park. Swimming was much less popular in 1926, beach visits having been reported by only 22 children.

Country visits, particularly among boys between the ages of 10 and 17, were next in popularity. In 1926, 44 boys, and in 1931, 45 boys, made country visits to friends and relatives on farms in nearby New Jersey and Long Island. Those not lucky

enough to go to camps, to the country or to the beaches, languished in the sweltering heat. During the summer time, school and other public play grounds and settlement houses were but little used.

### Independent Clubs

In addition to clubs and similar activities organized and maintained by social organizations, settlement houses and churches, independent groups were organized by the boys themselves for social and athletic purposes. Some clubs consisted entirely of boys living within the block while others, outside of the immediate neighborhood, included boys from Tyler Street. Membership fluctuated between six and ten boys, usually between the ages of 11 and 15. Dues were irregular assessments for the purpose of buying athletic supplies. Meetings were usually held in cellars or backyards and on the street. During 1926, a prosperity year, a great number of independent club groups flourished; but in 1931, a depression year, there was very little evidence of their existence. The earlier investigation drew a colorful picture of independent play groups:

"One club, the *K. K.'s*, formerly known as The Black Masks, departed a little from the usual purpose in that its main object was playing poker for money. It met regularly in a back yard. The purpose of this club, however, was said to be changed to being 'athletic,' and it had not gambled for 'half a year,' being afraid of the police and also because the father of one of the boys had forbidden him to gamble, except at New Year's and Christmas." This club during the summer went to Corlear's Park for swimming.

The *Olympic*, mentioned before as seeking admission to Hamilton House, was led by a boy of 12, who having read of Yale University in a Dick Merriwell book, decided 'to go to Yale, work his way through, and later conquer the world.' The Olympics derived their name from a newspaper account of the Olympic games. The *Olympic Juniors*, composed mostly of the younger brothers of the Olympics, followed along the same lines. The *Liberty*, *Sunnyside*, and *Union's* were groups on Tyler



Street similar to the above. The *E. B. A.'s*, a group of about eight or ten older boys from Tyler Street, sought admission to a local church, but being asked to pay rent for a room and also to contribute a percentage of the receipts of social affairs, decided that they could not afford this. Still without a meeting place, they spent a good bit of their time at the Young Men's Italian Democratic Club, playing ball. The *Sunset*, one of the older crowds of the street, had reached the point of having club rooms of its own on East Broadway. They were obliged to give up their room because dissension arose between the boys who were regularly employed and those who were not—the latter not being able to pay dues, and the former not being willing to bear the burden of running the club. The club, however, still continued its existence. Like the others, it had athletic ambitions.

Of the clubs not strictly confined to the blocks—the *Starlight* was a group of smaller boys similar to those described. The *Pike Street Gang*, a club without a definite location ganging together for the common purpose of attending movies, boxing matches, etc., had members from Tyler Street among its older boys. The *Market Street and East Broadway* gangs, deriving their cognomen from their 'hangout,' were questionable in their activities.

One club, composed of a small group of boys, 18 years and over, attempted to organize for a civic purpose, among their objectives being the building by the Board of Education of a junior high school in the neighborhood, and the opening of public schools as evening recreation centers. Not having the \$25.00 necessary for the incorporation fee, they hoped to raise this by giving a dance. Their plans were somewhat deferred by the fact that two of their members had been obliged to go to jail.

A type of club which did not belong to any of the foregoing groups was the *Independent Social Club*, on Market Street, of which one of the boys was a member. This club had a membership of about thirty. While social in its nature, it also had athletic aspirations, one of which was to organize a baseball club to play other teams outside the neighborhood. The dues were a dollar a month, with a \$5.00 initiation. The club gave the

services of a physician if any of the members were ill, and used its influence in helping them to get jobs.

The one outstanding independent club in 1931 was the Second Samoan Club, consisting of over 300 members drawn from the neighborhood, including boys from Tyler Street. The First Samoan Club was begun in 1915, but dissolved. In 1925 its successor was incorporated. Many members of the club at the time of survey lived in Brooklyn and elsewhere in New York City.

The actual number of Tyler Street boys reported as being members of independent clubs was small, only 16 in 1926 and 12 in 1931. It is probable, however, that a great many boys belonged to groups which neither they nor their parents dignified by the title of "club."

Eleven additional social groups of various types were reported upon in 1931.

The Book-lover's Club was organized by a sixteen year old boy who had taught Sunday School at the Mariner's Temple. The members of this club met on the roof and told stories. They were in general, a quiet, studious group. Thus, one member, a boy of eleven, was thin and pale, disliked rough games, took three books a week from the library, and took private music instruction.

Another group, the Yellow-Stone Base-Ball Club, meeting on Cherry Street, had a twelve year old Tyler Street boy as a member. Two brothers, ages ten and thirteen, belonged to a nameless club that met on the roof of their house. Another group of three boys, one a mental defective, played truant and spent their time on the roofs of the block. A boy of nine was organizing his own club on the roof of the house. It was nameless at the time of the survey. This boy said that he played entirely on the roof. On October 12th, a school holiday, about twenty boys cooked spaghetti there, told stories and played games. Both this boy and his older brother were fond of reading. They had been encouraged to play on the roof by the father, who has purchased pigeons for them. Another boy, aged fourteen, formerly belonged to The Silver Arrow Club, a group of fifty boys, which later broke up. In another house, a boy, aged eleven, belonged

to a club which met in his own home, where they cooked, read and told stories. A boy of fourteen belonged to a group of boys who played team games, such as punch ball. These boys argued and fought, but did not get into trouble. Another boy of thirteen belonged to a gang of five which spent its evenings around East Broadway and on the Manhattan bridge. This boy fell off the side of the bridge and broke his arm. A boy of fourteen associated with a group whose hangout was a dilapidated shed back of P. S. 177. This boy was undersized, a petty thief and a truant, and had an older brother who had been in the Catholic Protectory and was a typical gangster and drug addict. Visiting teachers tried unsuccessfully to get him to join the Boy Scouts and club groups at Hamilton House and Madison House.

### Other Activities

A great many boyhood activities were not confined to the home street. Many boys left the block to play where there was more space. Bootblacks who left the block in search of customers all tended to have their recreation away from the block.

*Pool rooms and cafes* did not, as a rule, draw boys until they were eighteen, although in a few instances, younger boys accompanied older brothers.

*The cafe* deserves consideration as a recreational force of the section because it seemed to be a natural social center, with a varying influence. While in some cases information as to its function was given readily, discussion was guarded in the case of many others. Some boys looked on cafes as natural neighborhood social centers while others felt that a few of them had a definitely destructive influence.

A favorable attitude toward cafes was shown by one boy who spent much of his time in a local cafe. He said: "I meet my friends there and play cards for drink, but never for money. I think the cafes are all right. It is too bad that everybody going to cafes should be blamed for what others may do there that is bad. All boys who go there are not bad, and a boy must have somewhere to go. He can't stay home in a place like this (indicating his surroundings) he must have some 'hang out' when it

is cold. I allow my younger brother (sixteen years old) to go frequently to this same cafe. I do object to some other cafes in the neighborhood where there are groups of bad older men who deliberately plan to carry out schemes for robberies and for other kinds of crime. Some of these are not from Tyler Street, but I think come from New Jersey."

The sociability of the cafe, especially in summer, was the chief inducement for a boy of seventeen, who visited cafes frequently. "I play cards sometimes and drink, but never gamble. The cafes are good places to go, although I know that often there is much gambling and quarreling in the ones I go to. I never go to any outside the neighborhood. A boy is safe in a cafe if he minds his own business and associates with his own crowd."

The oldest of three brothers, himself about eighteen, said, "I spend a great deal of spare time in the cafes and take my young brothers with me, but I always choose those I think are good. I know that some of the men gamble and oftentimes get into a quarrel over the gambling, but I and my young brothers play cards with our own friends and keep away from those other men who often get into trouble. We never gamble, and we don't know whether the others gamble, although we think they do on the side, but we like to go to the cafes for sociability. It is the one place in the neighborhood where the boys can go freely."

A boy, who never went to cafes said, "I never go into them because they give poison drink. Of that I am sure. My own brother died about a month ago because he was given poison drink, at a Tyler Street cafe. The whole building used to be filled with cocaine in the cracks, and they may have given him some of that in his drink. The cafe keeper is a bad man, and has been arrested several times. I never go near any cafe."

A mother's story of cafes was as follows: Her boy, sixteen years old, serving an eighteen-month sentence in the House of Refuge, spent his evening regularly in cafes in the neighborhood. The night of his arrest he had spent with a cafe keeper, who was arrested for being the instigator of the robbery committed by the boy that night. The boy was frequently taken into this cafe and given plenty of food. On this particular night, he was

given bad drink, so that "when he committed the robbery he didn't know what he was doing." His mother blamed the cafes entirely for his downfall, although she herself said: "I never allowed Tony to bring his friends home. I wouldn't have the boys in the house." His sister explained the mother's attitude by saying that she didn't encourage him to play because both mother and father were getting old and unable to work and expected him to bring in money. They felt "there was no time for play." It was possible for him to spend his evening in the cafes because his sister said he had a job which began at midnight and from which he returned early in the morning. The kind of work and the place were unknown to any of the family.

### Commercial Recreations<sup>11</sup>

There were no recognized commercial amusements on the Tyler Street block. Children attended neighborhood commercial recreations, consisting of motion picture theaters, pool rooms and bowling alleys. Older boys sought recreation outside of the immediate neighborhood, at dance halls and boxing matches.

Movies ranked first among commercial attractions both among boys and other members of the family, reaching a peak of attendance between the ages of ten and fourteen, when practically 100 percent of the boys attended. Most of the boys said they attended every change in program, which occurred three times a week at the Venice and the Florence, two popular neighborhood houses. On Saturday mornings when the price was 10¢, even younger boys between five and ten attended. Those boys of working age who had a little money of their own went six nights a week. Wild West pictures had the greatest attraction and occupied the largest part of the programs. The movie house was popular as a place to keep warm in the winter, and fathers went there on cold days when they were out of work. Among boys over 18, movie attendance dropped from 98 to 85 percent, as the attraction of other commercial amusements became greater.

<sup>11</sup> Commercial recreations have been defined as those which are operated for private gain.

About one-sixth of the boys over sixteen were attracted by the *Italian theater* in the neighborhood, and the larger movie theaters in the Times Square area.

*Dance halls* which were outside of the immediate neighborhood frequently attracted the older group.

*Boxing matches* were attended by more boys over fifteen than any other commercial amusement, with the exception of movies. These matches were not distinctly neighborhood affairs, for the boys attended them throughout the city. Some boys hoped to become boxers themselves some day, but the majority simply enjoyed watching the sport.

*Pool rooms* were slightly more popular among older boys than were cafes. A third of the boys played games there but others said they were good places in which to keep warm. Adverse criticism of any individual pool room was not heard anywhere in the neighborhood from either boys or parents.

In 1931, as compared with 1926, there was a marked decrease in motion picture, theater, dance hall, cafe, and prize fight attendance, this diminution being quite out of proportion to the loss of boy population during the interim period. Thus, whereas 68% of all ages attended movies in 1926, only 42% attended in 1931. Only pool room attendance did not suffer a disproportionate loss. Ball games, not listed in 1926, had seven devotees in 1931.

Among the older boys, there was a sharp trend away from active participation toward a passive spectator relationship to recreation. This was shown by a study of the recreational habits of successive age groups of nearly 900 children, representing the combined boy populations of Tyler Street in 1926 and 1931.<sup>12</sup>

This study, which analyzes separately the recreational trends of boys over working age in contrast with those under working age (age 15 being the dividing point), shows among the older group a constant progression away from participation in simple types of play toward, on the one hand, more complex forms of

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<sup>12</sup> There is, of course, a large duplication in these figures; but for practical purposes the same boys may be counted twice, since at six year intervals their play habits may be taken as representative of the same number of actually different individuals.

group activity, and on the other, toward highly complex specialized acts of skill, such as bowling, shooting pool and dancing; or passive spectator activities, such as theater attendance, prize fights and ball games.

Thus, among sixty-nine boys attending out-door playgrounds and athletic fields, only 13 were over fifteen years, and fifty-six were under fifteen years, but among 284 boys attending indoor neighborhood centers, 115 were over fifteen years and 169 were under fifteen years. Commercial recreations, with the exception of motion pictures, were the pursuits of the older group. Thus, among 513 boys of all ages, 338 under fifteen years and 175 over fifteen years attended motion pictures but only 5 under fifteen years, and 179 over fifteen, attended other types of commercial recreations.

### Character Building Institutions

Statistics of membership<sup>18</sup> indicate that the great majority of Tyler Street children were not amenable to adult supervised recreation and neighborhood house directors admitted the utmost difficulty in disciplining gang groups from the block. In view of the turbulent delinquent behavior of many boys on this block, the findings were significant.

Membership in settlement and parish houses dropped from 52 in 1926 to 48 in 1931, but, based on the total boy population, 516 in 1926 and 375 in 1931, there was an actual increase in membership, from 10% to 13%.

While nine privately supported settlement houses and community centers were accessible to Tyler Street boys, the great majority attended the five centers that were nearest to the block, consisting of two non-sectarian settlements, one Catholic neighborhood house, one Protestant church center, and one Catholic church center, all located within one block of Tyler Street. The Brace Memorial Newsboys' Club was the only house at a distance that drew a considerable membership, because of its active

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<sup>18</sup> The 1926 survey, while indicating the extent of membership in different supervised groups, did not indicate the number of children from the block who were not affiliated with any supervised recreation.

extension work, and its health and social work program among the families in the neighborhood. Thus, the pulling power of community centers was limited to a radius of several blocks, a conclusion in accord with the findings of recreation experts, that an institutional center's influence in reaching juvenile membership is usually limited to the immediately surrounding blocks. Thus, a club that would reach a majority of the boys of the Tyler Street block, assuming that a sufficiently diversified program would be offered, would probably have to be located directly on the block.

### Membership in Local Character Building Institutions

*Non-sectarian Settlement A*—Membership was small,—four in 1926 and five in 1931. Two or three boys said they went there occasionally to use the gymnasium. One boy of twelve, formerly a member, said, "There are too many kids there." Another boy secured a job as plumber's apprentice through the settlement house and was planning to join it. Two boys, active in a house club prior to 1926, had to give up their active membership because they became employed as printers' apprentices and in addition attended night school four or five nights in the week. Their attitude toward this settlement was appreciative and they said that when they had time they would attend occasional parties there. At least twenty of the boys questioned in 1926 said that they had never heard of this particular settlement house, although it was only two blocks away from Tyler Street. During the five years intervening, between 1926 and 1931, apparently no appreciable changes in this relationship took place, as the house continued to draw but a handful of members from the block.

*Non-sectarian Settlement B*—The past membership for 1926 showed a few representatives of a self-organized group which at one time attempted to establish meeting quarters in this house, but gave this up because they found the place too small for their activities.

A self-organized group of smaller boys, thirteen to fifteen years, the Olympic, applied for membership in 1926, and were on the waiting list because there was no available meeting room for



them. They did, however, join surreptitiously with some other boys, who under settlement house leadership, attended the gymnasium of a nearby public school on Friday afternoons. In 1931, only three Tyler Street boys attended the settlement, although its building was only several hundred feet away from the block.

*Catholic Neighborhood house*—There were in 1926 a Boy Scout troop and a Boy Rangers Club, of whom some were Tyler Street residents. Three boys, ten to fourteen, had joined the latter organization. Two boys were members of the Scouts, and seven boys had previously been Scouts. Of the two 1926 members, the younger one was not sure he would be able to remain so, as he did not have the uniform and his mother was sure she would not be able to afford to buy it for him.

Of the boys who had previously been Boy Scout members, two had left because a leader whom they admired and who had been there for two or three years had gone away. Two other boys felt that when they reached the age of fifteen or sixteen they became too old for Scout activities. Another left because he could not afford the uniform. One boy of fifteen refused to wear the uniform because he said, "I don't want them to make a fool of me." Two others were not permitted to wear the uniform because their fathers were convinced that it signified compulsory military training.

At this house, there was also Tyler Street attendance at general activities, such as boy and girl parties and the use of the gymnasium. Many of the boys who belonged to the local Roman Catholic church came to the house for confirmation instruction, and during that period of their lives had a close connection with this settlement. The house was well known to the boys of the neighborhood, most of them having had some connection with it in the past. Their attitude as they grew older, however, was that they had interests which took them away to other places. In 1931, only four boys were recorded as being members, currently.

*Brace Newsboys' Home* had in 1926, five Tyler Street members who were chiefly interested in the athletic activities, but did not speak of belonging to any other clubs in the House. Two boys, once members, were too busy with other interests to retain

membership. One younger boy said that his mother thought that this Club was too far away. During the last few days of the 1926 Survey on Tyler Street it was found that a number of boys had been asked to visit the Newsboys' Home by other members living on the block. At least seven spoke of this. The mother of one felt that it was too far away and so the boy did not feel very hopeful about joining, but he anticipated visiting it. The others were enthusiastic because of the prospect of athletic activities presented to them. They were also looking forward to a "feed" at their next visit.

*Protestant Church*—The parish club of this church, about two blocks away from Tyler Street, housed the Panther Club—a club of boys chiefly interested in athletics, of high-school and working age, about five or six of whom were living in this block in 1926. They had free use of the house during the day, when they were unemployed, occasionally playing checkers and dominoes. This club had transferred from a settlement which they described as being too small. In addition to the Panther Club, other boys, some over eighteen, attended athletic meetings, dances and parties. The chief attraction for these boys was the athletic program of the church house, although a few of them spoke of the talks that were given by a boy's work leader. The activities of this church house were well known to the boys on Tyler Street. Some, not members of the Panther Club, said that they could not afford to pay the dues, and others, who liked the athletic meets, said that they did not have the admission fee when they were out of work. It was this that probably reduced the membership in depression year 1931 to but one member.

*Roman Catholic Church*—Two boys, over seventeen, were attempting to organize a group of boys here and had secured the permission of the priest to meet in the basement for athletics. As soon as a large enough group could be organized to meet the payment of dues for the use of this space, the boys expected to have their group functioning. In 1931, 73 boys were recorded as attending the church, for religious, not recreational purposes.

*The Y. M. C. A., Bowery Branch*, had one member from this neighborhood, an older boy who came from Italy after he was

grown, whose chief interest in attending was for "intellectual activities." The use of the pool in the Bowery Branch of the Y. M. C. A. had been suggested to the members of the Panther Club, by the leader in the Protestant church, but the boys said that they did not have much money for that sort of thing.

*The Educational Alliance*, which is outside of the immediate neighborhood, had one Jewish member from Tyler Street, in 1926 and in 1931. One boy over eighteen, previously connected with the local Catholic settlement house, became a member of an uptown *Catholic Boys' Club* on East 42nd Street, attending once a week, chiefly for parties, dances, etc. In 1931, two boys were members.

### Outdoor Supervised Recreation

Only a small proportion of Tyler Street boys, 50 of 459 in 1926 and 20 of 313 in 1931, utilized the safe and supervised precincts of outdoor playgrounds and athletic fields. Most of these boys were below the age of fourteen.

The great majority of children engaged in unsupervised street play—in backyards, on roofs, piers, wharves, in hallways, and in the street itself.

### Supervised Summer Recreation

Camping was the only supervised summer recreation that attracted appreciable numbers of Tyler Street boys. Despite the marked drop in boy population, camp attendance increased from 7 in 1924, to 25 in 1930. This increase was probably significant of the increased confidence of Tyler Street parents in community centers and settlements.

### The Parental Supervision of Behavior

Two obviously significant factors in child adjustment are the extent and the character of parental supervision.

In the Tyler Street block, supervision was usually limited to gross control over hours of home coming and over mobility. Concern for the child was almost entirely on a *physical* basis—

the necessity for meals and sleep and the dangers of traffic. The progress of the child was from the lap of his mother to the floor of the home; then to the hall and doorway; then to the sidewalk in front of the house (below age six); then on the block (ages 6 to 9); and finally away from the block in varying degrees of distance. The horizon of ten to fourteen year old boys was bounded by nearby piers, wharves, playgrounds, and settlements, except for those who sold newspapers and polished shoes. Older boys went longer distances to work, to seek work and for commercial amusements.

The progressive lengthening of the range of movement was accompanied by decreased control over hours of homecoming and over activities. The control that persisted the longest was the insistence upon an early return at night. Among boys over eighteen in 1931, supervision over activities was indicated in but three cases, or 7%, whereas there was strict supervision over hours in twenty-one cases, or 51%. While 260 of 306 parents exercised control over hours, only 141 exercised control over activities, in 1931. (Table 13, Parental Control Over Tyler Street Boys.) Control over activities was usually with reference to the general whereabouts of the child, frequently with the demand that the child play on the home block. A few parents barred specific activities, such as visiting piers, and shining shoes. Several objected to the distance traveled to social centers.

The fear of crime and delinquency was great and all-pervading and many parents feared to have their children associate with neighboring children of bad reputation.

Parents frequently restricted children in their choice of companions, but aside from this negative form of control, the great majority of parents seemed oblivious to the specific character-forming influences of various kinds of play and occupation. Evidences of foresight or planfulness in guiding the play activities of children were few and there was surprising lack of interest in activities promoted by settlements and other social centers.

In thirty-five cases, or 11% there was no evidence of any form of supervision in 1931. The majority of these boys were over eighteen.

It is clear from the case records that in many instances the

TABLE 13  
PARENTAL CONTROL OVER TYLER STREET BOYS, 1926 AND 1931

Supervision	Totals		Under 6		6 to 9		10 to 14		15 to 17		18 and Over												
	1926 %	1931 %	1926 %	1931 %	1926 %	1931 %	1926 %	1931 %	1926 %	1931 %	1926 %	1931 %											
Supervision over hours .....	240	260	86	83	46	100	64	..	63	91	64	..	94	91	19	..	36	84	10	..	21	51	
None over hours .....	..	43	14	..	0	0	..	..	6	9	..	..	..	10	9	..	..	7	16	..	..	20	49
Totals for hours .....	240	303	100	83	46	100	64	..	69	100	64	..	104	100	19	..	43	100	10	..	41	100	..
Supervision over activities .....	46	141	46	10	42	92	16	..	36	50	17	..	45	44	7	..	15	13	3	..	33	7	..
None over activities .....	..	165	54	..	4	8	..	..	36	50	..	..	57	56	..	..	30	67	..	..	38	93	..
Total for activities .....	46	306	100	10	46	100	16	..	72	100	17	..	102	100	7	..	45	100	3	..	41	100	..
No supervision .....	159	35	11	10	0	0	31	..	3	4	56	..	6	6	30	..	6	13	32	..	20	49	..
Not given for hours .....	..	27	..	..	5	..	..	..	8	..	..	..	7	..	..	..	7	..	..	..	..	0	..
Not given for activities .....	..	24	..	..	5	..	..	..	5	..	..	..	9	..	..	..	5	..	..	..	..	0	..
Total unknown .....	117	51	..	48	10	..	14	..	13	..	28	..	16	..	7	..	12	..	20	..	..	0	..
<i>Relation of supervision to total number of boys</i>																							
Total number studied .....	516*	..	..	141	..	..	109	..	..	..	148	..	..	..	56	..	..	..	..	..	62	..	..
Supervision known .....	399	..	..	93	..	..	95	..	..	..	120	..	..	..	49	..	..	..	..	..	42	..	..
Supervision unknown .....	117	..	..	48	..	..	14	..	..	..	28	..	..	..	7	..	..	..	..	..	20	..	..

\* Four of the boys were away from home.

temperament and interests of the child determined the degree of supervision. The docile, studious child who was fond of reading, remained at home most frequently, while the impulsive, reckless, stubborn child fled the supervision of the home.

The difficult task of supervision was complicated by physical difficulties, such as the obvious inability to watch children from rear apartments. Parents who occupied apartments with windows on the street enjoyed superior opportunities for visual supervision. These mothers yelled at their children when they observed them fighting, or not heeding traffic, and cast re-assuring glances out of the window to make certain their younger off-spring were within sight and call. Parents shouted for boys at meal time and bed time. Parents owning street stands and stores had even better opportunities for supervision, and, in addition, those having stores provided a variety of work activities which exercised guidance indirectly. There is, however, strong doubt that the majority of the parents on this block knew just what their children were doing during their spare time.

The study of parental control in Tyler Street, for 1926 and 1931, shows agreement as to certain trends, but shows disagreement as to the proportions of children receiving supervision. Whereas 86% received supervision over hours and 46% over activities during 1931, only 60% were supervised for hours and but 11% for activities during 1926.<sup>14</sup>

What may have been a significant factor in this discrepancy was the difference in amount of time available for supervision in 1931 as contrasted with 1926. In 1926, 62% of all mothers were employed outside of household duties, as were 96% of all fathers. In 1931, only 35% of mothers, and 75% of fathers were employed, the remainder being idle and presumably at home.

<sup>14</sup> Subjective differences in method of estimate do not account for the difference between the two sets of data, for an analysis of the two sets of tables and a comparison of the two sets of findings discovers striking agreements. Thus, in 1926 it was stated: "Effective supervision decreases with the age of the boy and with the consequent attraction of resources outside of his own home. In many homes, when the older boy becomes a wage earner, the responsibility of supervising younger brothers is transferred to him. Among all boys, the tendency to break away from supervision begins when they are wage earners, contributing satisfactorily to the family budget." The difference cannot be explained either on the basis of a difference in the age composition of the two

## Types of Discipline

Only an incomplete picture can be given of the means utilized by Tyler Street parents to enforce control over the behavior of their children. In only thirty-eight cases were specific indications given of the types of discipline usually employed. These may be classified as either coercive, based on force or the threat of force; or persuasive, based on an appeal to subtle sentiments and motivations, or utilizing manipulation of situations to produce control. Only ten families used persuasive methods:—four families stressed methods calculated to modify attitudes, viz.: gentle reproof, (1); exhortation, (2); and kindly treatment, (1); while six families described specific types of situation control, viz.: two families refused to permit 16 year old boys the use of house-keys to compel early return at night; one mother gave her son lunch money daily to encourage him to seek employment, one father provided pigeons on the roof to keep his two sons, ages nine and thirteen, off the streets; one mother sent her son to the movies daily to keep him off the streets; and one mother gave money bribes.

The coercive forms of discipline, which may be divided into physical and psychological uses of authority, were as given in Table 14.

Only seventeen families made specific reference to parental strictness. In five cases, the father was strict, in one, the mother, and in eleven cases, both father and mother were strict. In a great many cases parents remarked that they were not strict. The evidence from the case records indicates that in general

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samplings, as the 1926 sampling had a slightly smaller percentage of older youths, and a somewhat large percentage of young children who would tend to receive a greater degree of supervision. The actual age differences were:

	1926		1931	
	No.	%	No.	%
Under 6 .....	93	23	46	15
6-9 .....	95	24	72	24
10-14 .....	120	30	102	33
15-17 .....	49	12	45	15
18 and over .....	42	11	41	13
	—	—	—	—
	399		306	

TABLE 14

## TYPES OF DISCIPLINE USED BY TYLER STREET FAMILIES

A. <i>Physical</i>	B. <i>Psychological</i>
Parental beating . . . . . 7	Scolding . . . . . 4
Beating by older brother . . . . 4	Shouting . . . . . 2
Slapping by mother . . . . . 4	Threats of beating . . . . . 1
Slapping by father . . . . . 1	Threats of "putting away" . . . 1
Biting by mother . . . . . 1	Inducing fear of father . . . . . 2
	Inducing fear of older brother 1

while parents may have inclined to shouting and temper outbursts on occasion, they were, as a rule, lax in the supervision of discipline of their children; understood occasional force and the threat of force as punishment, but seemed almost completely devoid of subtle means of controlling behavior consistently through situation manipulation. This lack is perhaps a significant clue to the intellectual status of the residents of the block, inasmuch as there is a close relationship between intelligence and the understanding of the motivation of conduct.

### Behavior Problems and Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency in this block must be considered with reference to the adult delinquency patterns in the same block for, between the two, there may have been a causative relation.

Historically, the block has been part of an area in which there has been a tradition of criminality. The studies of the New York State Crime Commission disclosed the area in which this block is included to have been productive of severe criminality among the 16-20 year age group.<sup>15</sup>

In 1927 the area in which the block was included had the highest juvenile delinquency rate in the Lower East Side. In 1930 the area including this block was among the twelve areas leading in juvenile delinquency in the Borough of Manhattan.

The extensive delinquency pattern of the area had its repercussions in the anxiety of Tyler Street parents over the trend toward delinquency among their own children. Members of

<sup>15</sup> *The Youthful Offender*, by Harry M. Shulman, New York State Crime Commission, (J. B. Lyon), 1931. P. 117-130.



almost every family visited were either thankful that their children had survived delinquent influences or expressed the hope that they might survive them.

In their interviews, parents gave a strong impression of being protective in relation to the more serious delinquent behavior of their children. Only 8, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1%, of the boys were reported by their parents as being delinquent; but with reference to behavior that did not involve a violation of the law, 49 of 225 cases,<sup>16</sup> or 21%, were reported by parents as being problem children. Of these, 34 were either wilful, uncooperative, or disobedient; 12 were excessively stubborn and assaultive; 2 were destructive; 1 was "nervous." The greatest number of non-conforming children were between the ages of 10 and 14 years. (Table 15, Behavior of Boys, as reported by Tyler Street Parents, 1931.)

TABLE 15

BEHAVIOR OF BOYS AS REPORTED BY TYLER STREET PARENTS, 1931

Behavior Types	Ages					Totals
	Under 6	6-9	10-14	15-17	18-20	
<b>(A) Conforming</b>						
Obedient and well-behaved .....	6	13	21	12	5	57
Well-behaved usually, no specific behavior difficulties .....	16	22	29	15	29	111
	22	35	50	27	34	Total 168
<b>(B) Non-Conforming</b>						
Nervous .....	..	1	..	..	..	1
Destructive .....	2	..	..	..	..	2
Negativistic .....	..	2	8	1	1	12
Wilful, non-cooperative or disobedient .....	10	10	11	3	..	34
Delinquent .....	..	..	5	3	..	8
Totals .....	12	13	24	7	1	Total 57
Not reported .....	20	27	31	15	13	106

There is no means of determining what factors influenced the selectivity of responses by parents. The parental tendency was

<sup>16</sup> 106 cases were not reported.

to describe children's conduct in sweeping terms. At least one out of every four mothers reported "my boy is a good boy; he never gets into trouble." The average parent in this group seemed incapable of analyzing the behavior of children into more subtle variations.

### Official and Unofficial Delinquency

The inadequacy of official juvenile delinquency statistics as a measure of the extent of the delinquent behavior in an area is indicated by the fact that a large number of unrecorded behavior problems were discovered among the children of this block. Among 40 different boys reported as having behavior difficulties, only 6 were officially known as delinquents; 9 were serious unrecorded cases of delinquency, and 25 were milder behavior problems. The cases of actual delinquency ran a wide gamut of offenses, including truancy, theft, sex assault, unauthorized operation of automobiles, and violation of corporation ordinances.

The unofficial cases of delinquency covered a wide range of problems, of which the following are illustrative:

A. Salvatore, age 15, a borderline mental defective with an I.Q. of 66, was a truant and a school behavior problem, under the supervision of the Crime Prevention Bureau for gambling in school. While a truant, he spent his time on tenement house roofs in the company of two companions who also lived on the block.

B. Rosario, age 12, had been arrested for turning on a water hydrant with a wrench given to him by an adult. An older boy, age 17, was a truant, and in 1929 was committed to the Catholic Protectory. At the time of the survey he was unemployed and spent most of his time on street corners.

C. A girl of 16 had been sentenced to the Catholic Protectory in 1929 for having participated with a younger sister, age 10, in the theft of a coat in a Fourteenth Street department store. The father had been accused by relatives of incest with the older daughter.

D. Salvatore, age 12, had stolen both from school and from a settlement house from which he was expelled. He was a

bootblack. His older brother was reported by a visiting teacher as being unemployed and a gang member. The oldest son had a prison record. The mother was reported as being a chronic beggar.

E. Fred, age 14, an undersized member of a gang group which formerly met in a shed on an empty lot behind a public school, was a truant and petty thief. His older brother, age 20, was committed to the Catholic Protectory for theft and was later reported to be a gangster and drug addict. The father had deserted ten years ago.

F. Tony, age 13, was a bootblack. An older brother was at the time of survey in Clinton State Prison as a narcotic vender. Matteo, age 19, a wagon-peddler, had been in the truant school and had been arraigned in the Children's Court for the theft of a quantity of newspapers from a subway stand. The home was dirty, the mother slovenly, and the father physically handicapped.

Not all cases of delinquency appeared to be primarily of environmental origin, as indicated by the following case of mental deficiency with a possible post-encephalitic basis:

G. Frank, age 9, was extremely impulsive and without a sense of danger. He hitched on automobiles and twice in one month was nearly drowned. He was also a truant, and was seriously retarded in school. The neighbors advised the mother to place him in an institution where he would avoid being killed through his own wildness. Others advised the mother to have the child baptized a second time to see if a curse could not be taken from the child.

The role of parental inadequacy in the causation of delinquent behavior is discovered in an analysis of behavior problems among the younger children on the block. This parental behavior consisted of the display of either infantile or delinquent behavior toward children. In many of these cases the parents either beat the young children or shouted at them; or, when exhausted by these methods, indulged them by granting their wishes.

## CHAPTER NINE

### FLEET STREET

**F**LEET STREET was in the heart of little Italy, close to the old "Five Point" section, on the border between a Neapolitan Italian settlement and Chinatown, from which communities the block had drawn upon for its population. Less congested than many slum streets because it faced on a public park and playground, it was a typical mixture of small retail business and residences, consisting of familiar "old law" tenements with ground floor stores.

#### Composition of Population

The nationality composition of the block was very largely Chinese but among the families who reported children of survey age the Italians predominated.<sup>1</sup>

The study deals with approximately 300 individuals, consisting of 52 families in 1926 and 50 in 1931.<sup>2</sup> Similarly to Tyler Street, this block was a racial colony of remarkably permanent

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics of birth places of fathers was, in 1926 and 1931, (1926 given first) United States, 11-15; Italy, 38-35; Poland, 0-1; China, 0-1; Honolulu, 1-0; South America, 1-0, unknown, 1-0.

Same, for mothers; United States, 10-12; Italy 41-35; France, 0-1; Hungary, 0-1; China, 0-1; Honolulu, 1-0.

A balanced picture of the life of this block including Chinese as well as Italian family life was frustrated by the unwillingness of Chinese parents to participate in the survey. Although school sources reported 19 Chinese school children as residents of the block, only 3 were acknowledged in a house-to-house canvass.

<sup>2</sup> In 1926, this group consisted of 98 parents, 23 other adults, 90 boys under sixteen including seven infants not included in the study, 66 girls under sixteen, 18 boys and 12 girls over sixteen. In 1931, the group consisted of 89 parents, fourteen other adults of whom ten were boarders, 82 boys and 53 girls under sixteen, and 36 boys and 33 girls over sixteen. In both years, the sampling totalled 307 individuals.

residence. Seventeen families, or 34 percent had been residents of the block twenty or more years, nine were resident between ten and twenty years, six from six to ten years, twelve from two to five years, and only six were there a year or less. Sixty-four percent of the residents in 1931 had been living on the block when the 1926 survey was conducted. Those in 1931 who had moved into the block during the interim period were members of the same nationality group.

The proportion of American and foreign-born parents did not change during this interval, the proportion of American-born parents having been approximately 20% in both years. There was no important change in the proportion of stable, unbroken homes, the percentage being 88% in 1926 and 80% in 1931. The block, therefore, was similar during both years with reference to nationality, nativity, and religion.

The size of the boy population between the ages of 2 and 21 was relatively similar for both years, having been 101 in 1926 and 98 in 1931.<sup>3</sup> A large proportion of the boys were represented in both surveys. The age composition of the boy population was affected by the stability of residence, the proportion of those over the age of 16 having increased from 17% in 1926 to 31% in 1931 and, conversely, the proportion of those under 16 having dropped from 83% in 1926 to 69% in 1931.

Nearly all of the boys were of American birth and practically all were Roman Catholics, as were their parents. In 1926, 4, and in 1931, 2 were foreign born, 3 in Italy and 1 in Honolulu. In 1926, 1 was Protestant, and in 1926 3 were Protestant and 1 Hebrew.

### Housing

Housing conditions on Fleet Street were almost uniformly bad. The buildings, ranging from four to seven stories in height, contained from four to twenty-six flats, the usual structure being either a one-lot, eight-flat house or a two-lot, sixteen or eighteen-flat tenement.

<sup>3</sup> Age groupings of boys in the study were, for 1926 and 1931, (1926 figures given first) under 4, 7 and 6; 4-5; 8 and 11; 6-9, 28 and 25; 10-14, 36 and 28; 15-17, 12 and 14; 18-, 10 and 14.

Only five of the thirty-two buildings on the block were new-law apartments, built under the Model Housing Code of 1901. The remaining twenty-seven were all deteriorated, old-type structures usually with dangerous, old style vertical ladder fire escapes. Not a single house had a modern staircase fire escape.

Toilet facilities were entirely inadequate; there were 17 toilets in flats, 110 in the halls, and in backyards there were 82 out-door toilets. On the average, there was one toilet to accommodate two families, although four families were known to share one toilet.

The average family obtained its primary ventilation from only one set of windows, either at the front or the back of the flat. A typical flat, three rooms deep, was usually steeped in gloom and inadequately ventilated in two of its rooms, although there were occasional small air shafts serving inner rooms.

Violations of tenement house regulations ranged from one to thirty-eight per house, an average of 9.6 violations per house, classifiable either as structural, as caused by deterioration due to owner's negligence, or as caused by direct tenant negligence. Structural defects comprised such items as inadequate fire-proofing and improperly constructed fire escapes. Deterioration covered items such as broken and rusty fire escapes, faulty plumbing and leaks, falling plaster, torn wall paper, dirty walls and ceilings, broken stairs, etc. Acts such as obstructing fire escapes, throwing garbage down airshafts, and accumulating household goods on bulkheads constituted tenant negligence. Among 284 violations, 78 were structural, 186 were caused by physical deterioration, and 14 were directly due to tenants' negligence. Prostitution was the basis of four violations and the occupancy of a cellar room for dwelling purposes was the cause of another. The reason for one violation was undetermined.

A typically deteriorated house was the following, with sixteen violations between the years 1927 and 1931:

Structural defects ordered remedied—removal of lock on bulkhead door, shut-off gas valve required (cancelled), fire-proofing of stair passage to cellar needed, doors on first floor not closing.

Deteriorations due to negligence of owner—fire-escapes rusty, flushing apparatus in watercloset defective, slate base and wood-work in watercloset defective, bowls defectively set, bowl broken,

seats in watercloset broken, ceiling dirty, glass in window loose, hinges on doors broken, plaster broken.

Conditions due to negligence of tenants—accumulation of garbage in airshaft, premises infested with rats.

### The Home

The characteristic Fleet Street home in both 1926 and 1931 was a three or four room flat with a rent varying between \$20.00 and \$40.00 per month. While the typical Fleet Street building was an old style tenement house in bad repair, with dark rooms and hallways, on the whole the housing was much better than in the other downtown blocks that were surveyed. The Chinese were gradually assuming ownership and were improving many of the homes.

The layout of rooms resulted in a minimum of privacy—a point of particular importance to children attempting to get their school home work completed. With few exceptions, the front room was both a living room and bedroom.

The heating and sanitary facilities were in 1931 as primitive as they had been in 1926; in certain instances even more so.<sup>4</sup> Thus only one family reported a bath tub in 1931, whereas ten reported tubs in 1926. In 1931, four families reported no heating facilities whatever, whereas none had made such a report in 1926.

The typical family on Fleet Street got along without a bath tub or running hot water, cooked and kept warm by the heat of a kitchen stove, and shared a hall toilet with another family, or used damp, unhealthful backyard toilets whose walls were covered with obscene writings in chalk. The hall toilet was a source of considerable anxiety to many families, inasmuch as a great number of Chinese men who were believed to be sexually promiscuous and venereally infected lived in the buildings.

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<sup>4</sup>The statistics of heating and sanitation in 1926 and 1931 were: (1926 figures given first) bath in apartment, 10-1; no bath in apartment, 41-47; hot water 11-6; cold water only, 40-43; toilet in apartment, 12-16; toilet in hall shared with one family, 29-22; yard toilet, shared with one family, 10-11; unspecified hall toilet, 0-1; steam heat, 3-0; kitchen stove, 48-47; no heating facilities reported, 0-4.

Where Chinese became occupants of apartments, their Italian neighbors on the same floor would not share the same hall toilet, and were, therefore, compelled to go down several flights of stairs to the damp backyard toilets.

Lack of bathing facilities was a serious inconvenience; the public baths were at a distance and many families used private bath houses. In the case of younger children, parents were forced to bathe them in the kitchen tub. The children disliked making the trip to the distant bath house because of the fights that ensued with boys from other localities. One boy said:—"If you go to Cherry Street Public Baths, and if you have your hair slicked up, and dress up, the gang in that block attacks you and writes 'Fairy' all over you. What we need is a bath house in this neighborhood."

The single modern facility which was practically universal in the block in 1931 was electric illumination.

### Aesthetic Standards in the Home

Homes in this block may be divided into those which were both clean and comfortably furnished, those which were clean but poorly furnished and those which were both poorly furnished and either disorderly or filthy.

Inasmuch as no satisfactory home rating procedure was then available, the classification of homes in 1931 was a relatively subjective one. Homes were classified as comfortable if there were numerous accessories, such as pictures, vases, lamps, and rugs, and if a number of substantial pieces of furniture were listed. A differentiation was made between dirty and disorderly. Where clothing was scattered about and where furniture and other articles were out of place, a home was called disorderly. A place was called dirty only where there were marked physical evidences of uncleanness, such as dirty curtains, dirty floors, dirty bed clothing, etc.

Not a single home in the fifty on this block could be said to have possessed the slightest approach to good taste or to indicate an aesthetic sensitivity on the part of its occupants. On the other hand, the great majority of the homes were, if not comfortable,



at least clean and orderly. Thus, of forty-three homes out of the fifty, eight were both clean and comfortable, and twenty-four were clean but sparsely furnished. Nine homes were poorly furnished, and either dirty or disorderly. Two homes were comfortably furnished, but disorderly.

### Broken and Disorganized Homes

The majority of Fleet Street families were intact, since both true parents were alive and at home.<sup>5</sup> The normal homes were in all but two instances composed of parents of the same nationality. Two instances of inter-marriages—between an Italian woman and a Jewish man, and between an Italian woman and a Chinese man, seemed to have resulted in stable homes.

In 12 out of 50 families, or in 24% of the instances, the home life was broken by the death or absence of a parent. Since homes of the latter type are usually regarded as causative of many social problems, especial attention was paid to them in this study. Study disclosed, however, no family disorganization in these broken homes. All appeared to be going concerns, and the surviving member appeared to have adequate control over the children.

Eight of the broken homes were cases of simple breaks, involving the death of one parent, in two instances a mother and in six instances a father. In the remaining four instances, social complications accompanied the family break.

### Social Backgrounds of the Family

The picture of the social backgrounds of the average Fleet Street family, while dependent primarily upon the closely written family schedules of the case survey, has been given vividness by the generalizations of a trained observer.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The statistics of civil status of the parents, were in 1926 and 1931: (1926 given first) father and mother at home, 46 families, 88%, 40 families, 80 percent; father a widower, 0-2; mother widowed, 3-6; step-father and true mother, 0-1; mother at home, father away due to separation, 3-1.

<sup>6</sup> The description was written by a worker who participated in the 1931 survey of the block and who, having engaged in social service work in Rome, Italy, among families of similar type, was in a position to make objective comparisons between family life as she saw it there and here.

The majority of the families living on Fleet Street give no indications of past indulgence in luxuries. If they have been extravagant, the money must have been spent in diversion, entertainment and dress. The homes are furnished very simply, with bare necessities. In the homes visited in connection with this survey there was only one carpeted floor. The other floor covering was linoleum, the poorer families having bare floors. In several homes a massive china closet, taking up much space and filled with cheap china and knick-knacks, seemed to be the only badge of elegance. Many homes had refrigerators, but in the entire block only three had ice in them.

In Italy this same type of people lived in much cleaner homes. Unfortunately, they brought with them only their clothing and none of their simple ancestral furniture. Instead, they have purchased tawdry new American things.

Very poor provision was made for the reception of mail. The mail boxes in the outer hall were wrecked and broken—only rarely was one marked with a name. Now and then one saw in them either circulars or an electric bill. During the whole period of inquiry not more than three or four personal letters were seen.

Toilets were in bad condition, and telephone books were used for purposes other than for parades.

The mid-day meal was a most casual thing. No one sat down at the table; children drifted in and ate a bit, one standing here, another there. Delicatessen food was often used, for ice was used for refrigerating purposes only in the summer time.

Feelings of racial superiority displayed themselves. The Italian women felt they were quite superior to the Chinese, and an American woman married to a Chinese felt that she was superior to her Italian neighbors. The mothers of French parentage felt superior to their Italian neighbors. One felt that her neighbors were jealous of her because her home was always so clean.

Family ties were very strong, and this block had many family groups, consisting of children and parents, or of cousins.

Racial attitudes were shown in the manner in which family clusters took place. Thus Fleet Street may be divided into two parts—the upper part, in which practically all the families were Italians, and where family groups were numerous; and the lower part, where there were many Chinese and few Italians. Those Italians living among the Chinese appeared to have been of a very

low type, and isolated, for there were practically no family groups living together.<sup>7</sup>

There survived on this block certain distinctive outstanding Italian customs. They had great respect for the comare, i.e., the god-mother. After the child's first communion or confirmation the god-mother, or comare, is not called "maria," but "comare maria." When the god-child marries, the god-mother always gives a beautiful present.

The people were very hospitable. They had so very little to eat themselves, yet were always pressing the visitor to eat with them, no matter what time of the day it was. The various families in the building knew each other intimately—in many instances by their first names only.

There appeared to be a strong mental bond between parents and children. Only once in the block did a mother express mild antipathy toward a child. Among the children there was a constant begging for pennies and nickels, and on the part of the parents, a constant shelling out of them to the youngsters.

The people appeared to be very dull, and it was difficult to obtain adequate judgments from them. There was neither accuracy nor order in their thinking or living. Their English was as atrocious as was their Italian. They did not speak English, but "American." They expressed very few ideas, and had no individuality in their homes.

Very few received any help from social service organizations, and so far there had been no evictions.<sup>8</sup> The depression, however, was showing its effects. The parents complained that they had no money and that "the electric" was high. Hardest hit were the young fellows who were out of work. They, however, had not utilized their time by attending a trade school. It was suggested to them, but it did not meet with a favorable reaction. Many of those unemployed accepted their economic fate with resignation, and if they rebelled at all, it took the form of a verbal outpouring, rather than action of any sort.

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<sup>7</sup> This observation lends rise to the hypothesis that racial colonies gain their strength from united family groups, and that where racial interpenetration takes place, it is among families which have become isolated from strong family group influences. From this standpoint, the Italian racial colony represents an arrested development in the transition from the patriarchial Italian family group to the American form of the relatively isolated individual family.

<sup>8</sup> The reader must recall that this was written prior to the worst of the depression.

Living was confined to the day to day process, and at the most from month to month. The laborers, those whose work was not steady, fared badly. Even in good times they were out of work three or four months during the year. During a protracted depression all of the money they had been able to save was spent in their enforced idleness.

In the intelligent families, insurance was carried and provision for the future of the children was thought about and planned. Most husbands, however, did not carry insurance, although their wives would have liked them to in most instances. The husbands were superstitious. They believed that to be insured meant that one would die. The children, however, were insured.

### Health of Parents

Chronic ill-health among parents was frequent on Fleet Street. Among fifty families studied in 1931, eight parents had constitutional diseases and three had mental disturbances, an 11% illness rate for chronic disease alone. Only five parents were reported as being chronically ill in 1926.

Every case of constitutional disease reported in 1931 directly affected some aspect of family life. Thus, a father, aged 54, almost blind due to a paralysis of the ocular nerve, had been unemployed fourteen years. Another father was incapacitated for employment, or even for normal locomotion, because of lameness. A mother, an invalid for the past two years, underwent three operations and lost the use of one arm. Another mother of 56, a chronic invalid with an undiagnosed ailment, could not walk down the stairs and received no medical care because there was no money for a physician.

In only one instance was adequate medical care given—a Chinese mother with a severe cardiac ailment had a graduate nurse in attendance. The mother occupied a bed in a windowless inner room.

Of the three mental cases, one wife had become insane after childbirth, one mother was in an insane asylum, and one father had become a chronic alcoholic since the death of his wife.

Another great obstacle to adequate family life was childbirth. Many mothers expressed a fear of impending childbirth and a

desire to avoid future pregnancy. Some of the younger Italian women used the available birth control clinic resources in the community. Two mothers admitted use of birth-control methods.

One mother, aged thirty-eight, Italian born, was still nursing a twenty-two months old child, because of the fear of further pregnancy.<sup>9</sup>

In several other families no contraceptive methods were apparently being used, but the mother "wished" there would be no more children.

The predicament of the ignorant, poverty-stricken expectant mother on this block may be illustrated by the case of a young Italian woman, aged 26, born in New York City, who was about to have another baby, and had not made any arrangements for confinement. She wanted a hospital confinement, but stated that she did not know what procedure to follow for admittance. Several visiting nurses had called, she said, but nothing had been done about the matter. Another informant, however, discussing this mother's plight, directly blamed her for failing to cooperate with the visiting nurses with reference to arrangements for confinement.

During her previous confinement, which had taken place at home, she nearly died during childbirth, the levatrice (mid-wife) having been unable to deliver the child without the aid of an ambulance doctor. This mother, though about to be confined, still continued her daily duties as janitress, arising every morning at four o'clock to clean four flights of stairs. In conversation with a neighbor, she threatened to turn on the gas and kill herself and the children.

Another mother, aged 24, born in the United States of Catholic parents, had married at the age of fifteen years, and at the time of interview had four children, ranging in age from eight years to fourteen months. She was desirous of not having any more children, and was attending a birth-control clinic.

Another Italian mother, aged 31, born in New York City, had three children, ages ten, six and three, and stated that she

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<sup>9</sup> A traditional Italian belief is that pregnancy does not take place during the nursing period, and many mothers continue breast feeding for an unbelievably long period in order to avoid conception.

was beginning to feel the effects of hard work. She feared the possibility of having more children and had already had three abortions. Her sister-in-law had had nine abortions.

She stated that all of her women friends and relatives had had abortions performed, some by mid-wives, but that she and her sister went to a doctor. Neither of them had been to a birth-control clinic.

### Occupations of Parents

Most Fleet Street fathers were employed as unskilled laborers, as longshoremen, truck drivers, packers, coal passers, factory operatives, etc. Skilled workers, 6 in 1926, and 5 in 1931, worked at tailoring, book-binding, accordion-making. A handful, 4 in 1926, and 2 in 1931, owned local shops, as a barber shop, pool room, bakery and fish market. One doctor, resident in 1926, had moved before 1931.

### Employment of Mothers

Although the majority of Fleet Street mothers did only household work in their own homes, in 1926, 29%, and in 1931, 19% of the mothers did other work. Among the employed mothers, 9 of 15 worked at home in 1926, and 5 of 9 in 1931. The number of mothers working outside of the home was never more than 11%, and dropped during the depression to 7%. Thus, most of the mothers in this block were in a position to devote the major portion of their time to the rearing of their children. (Table 16, Employment of Fleet Street Mothers, 1926 and 1931.)

Those mothers employed outside of the home as machine operators, clothing finishers, char-women, shop-keepers, and stand-keepers made substantial contributions to the family income, their earnings varying from \$10.00 to \$30.00 per week.<sup>10</sup>

Home industry, such as the finishing of men's clothing and

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<sup>10</sup> Consistent with the procedure in the study of the other blocks, no attempt was made to compute average weekly family incomes from the reported earnings of individual members, the element of irregularity of employment constituting too great a variable to allow for accurate tabulation.

TABLE 16  
EMPLOYMENT OF FLEET STREET MOTHERS, 1926 AND 1931

Type of Occupation	Totals		Income						Rental Free	
	1926	1931	Under \$10	\$10-14	\$15-19	\$20-30	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>Work in the Home:</i>										
Hand finisher, men's clothing	3*	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Janitress	6	4	4	2	..	..	..	..	..	2
Embroiderer on hose	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Work Outside the Home:</i>										
Garment factory finisher	1	1	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..
Garment factory operator	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Machine operator	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..
Shopkeeper	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Pushcart helper, for husband	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Millinery saleswoman	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Office cleaner	2	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..
Office cleaner and washing	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Not commercially employed	37†	40	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Totals	52	49	7	4	2	1	3	1	..	2

\* Two not working on account of new baby.

† Includes 2 mothers helping in husbands' stores, 1 deserted mother doing housework for her mother and father in return for home, and 1 mother keeping house for her father in return for meals for self and family.

janitorial work, paid a much smaller wage, usually under \$10.00 per week.

### Effects of the Economic Depression

The economic depression materially reduced the earnings of the principal breadwinner. The modal salary in 1926 was in the \$30.00 to \$39.00 group, and in 1931 it was in the \$20.00 to \$29.00 group. In the earlier year, fathers' salaries started at \$20.00 and ran to \$50.00, whereas, in the latter year, salaries started at \$6.00 and ran to \$50.00, only one individual, however, receiving over \$40.00 and twelve individuals receiving less than \$20.00 in 1931. Thus the group as a whole had approximately \$10.00 sliced from the pay envelope, and the number of men working at starvation wages was large.

Concomitant with the reduction in the earning capacity of those employed was the marked increase in the number of unemployed fathers. In 1926, 44 out of 46 fathers, or 96% were working; but in 1931 only 33 out of 46 fathers, or 71% were employed. Of the 13 who had no regular employment, six were completely idle and seven were engaged in emergency relief "made work."

Regularity of employment did not change materially between the two survey years. A relatively large proportion of fathers in both years suffered irregular employment—20 of 44 in 1926, and 10 of 25 on whom this fact was recorded in 1931.

An analysis of the economic status of Fleet Street families at the time of the 1931 re-survey, during the industrial depression, disclosed a disturbing degree of privation, want, and even of physical suffering, due to lack of employment and the exhaustion of meager resources. A classification of these families into five groups showed that 50% were either at or above a subsistence level on a low economic plane, and the remaining 50% were below this subsistence level. In other words, one-half of these families had been driven by the depression to living standards that spelled physical degradation, ill health, and mental tension.

Among those families in the fortunate upper brackets, three families, or 6%, were comfortable, with incomes that allowed



for savings, one case was undetermined in status, and 21 families, or 42%, had an income adequate to allow for continuance at a low economic level, without allowing for savings.

Among the families in the lower brackets, 13, or 26%, had an inadequate income, resulting from part time employment and unemployment, and lived upon slender savings and the bounty of friends and relatives. Six cases, or 12% were in imminent danger of destitution with an almost total absence of income and an almost total depletion of resources. Six other families, or the remaining 12%, were in destitute circumstances, had no income from wages, had depleted resources, and were subsisting on money provided through home and work relief by public and private emergency relief organizations.

Those families which were fortunate enough to secure philanthropic aid were thereby placed in a relatively better position than those which were in danger of destitution, for the \$10.00 or \$15.00 per week afforded through relief compared favorably with the incomes being earned by those families which were below the subsistence level.<sup>11</sup> From the standpoint of many Fleet Street families, therefore, the dole meant more security and almost as much income as did productive labor, during the depression period.

The four following case synopses deal with typical families at four levels of economic security.

#### *Case 12 (Good economic status)—*

The father, age 36, was born in New York City. He was illiterate, lived at home, and was regularly occupied as a truck helper from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M., earning \$35.00 per week. The mother, aged 35, born in Italy but reared in the United States, was literate and occupied herself as a house-wife in the home.

There were three children, ages 11, 9, and 7, who were brought up as Catholics. The father was Jewish and the mother Italian.

Mother and children were clean and well dressed. Every-

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<sup>11</sup> This statement is not intended to convey the impression that adequate relief was provided during this phase of the depression period, but merely to indicate that the money wage of these families had sunk to such a low level that even inadequate relief almost equaled the money wage of many families.

thing was in order and clean. The rooms were sunny and bright. There was a kitchen cabinet, the doors of which were curtained. The laundry tubs were used as a table, at which the family ate. The pictures on the walls were not the usual religious subject, but were, instead, landscapes.

The informant was fearful of allowing the field worker into her home, saying that these days one could never tell what "people" were going to do. She would not tell her name at first, and then gave her maiden name. She said that she did not want her boy to go to camp, that she had heard that they learned bad things at camp, and sometimes they "got sick" or they drowned. There was a definite feeling of suspicion and hostility in this home.

The mother was not busy—she was visiting with an Italian woman who lived in the adjacent apartment. It was this neighbor who made it possible to get any information. The mother stated she had many friends on the block.

#### *Case 13 (Subsistence level)—*

The father, age 46, was born in Italy and entered the United States in 1896 while an adolescent. He spoke English but was illiterate. He lived at home, worked regularly as a night watchman from 7:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. He had lost his regular job and was working as an usher in a motion picture theater, his income, nevertheless, being, as hitherto, \$25.00 per week. He was a member of the Sons of Italy and of the local Catholic Church.

The mother, aged 40, born in Italy, had entered the United States in 1903. She, too, spoke English but was illiterate. She was occupied as janitress in the home building and was a member of the local Catholic Church.

Both parents had lived on the block thirteen years.

The informant (the mother) was pleasant, but not intelligent, and absolutely unschooled. The informant's mother and an unmarried son occupied an adjacent apartment on the same floor and their meals were taken with this family. The mother said:

"My brother, who is 46, has been out of work three years. He is an American, and the place where he worked let him out and they are employing Porto Ricans for less money.

"I had eight children, but these days it is hard to support yourself.

"I haven't any water in my apartment after 8:00 P.M. I do not know what we'd do if there was a fire. For two weeks we haven't had any water after 8:00 P.M. at night."

This mother said that they could get along if she did not have to support her brother and mother. The father was working after sixteen months of unemployment.

The apartment consisted of one large room with two windows. One section of the floor (under the stove) had been tiled at the expense of the tenant. Oilcloth had been put on the walls. Cupboards had been put up and their shelves hung with bright oilcloth. Besides the large room used for cooking, eating and congregating, there was a good sized bedroom with two windows and a smaller bedroom with no windows or air duct. Religious pictures and a blessed palm hung over the beds in the bedrooms.

At the time of the visit, the mother was cooking a supper of stew, spaghetti, and spinach.

The oldest daughter of this family was married to the oldest son of the family upstairs. In other words, the only three white families in this building were related by blood or marriage.

#### *Case 14 (Near Destitution)—*

The father, aged 42, was born in Italy and came to the United States in 1908. He spoke English and read Italian. He lived at home and was irregularly employed several days from 8 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. as an accordion maker in a factory. His income was \$10.00 per week on which a family of nine subsisted. His ordinary income had been \$35.00 per week.

The mother, aged 40, was born in Italy and came to the United States in 1912. She spoke English but was illiterate. She lived at home and was occupied as a housewife.

Both parents were members of the local Catholic church.

In this family there were three girls, ages 17, 11 and 3, and four boys, ages 16, 13, 9 and 7.

The rooms were slovenly and ill-kept. Curtains on which cof-

fee had been spilled, had not been washed. On one window, there was only half a curtain. The mother hastened to clean up something on the floor as the field worker entered. Her clothes were dirty and her hair disheveled.

The two front rooms were light and sunny (facing south): the two back rooms, large enough to hold only a double bed, were without windows and had no air shaft. Twine, debris, and boards that apparently had been picked up for fire wood, littered one corner of the floor. Two accordions in process of being built were heaped with all sorts of accordion material on a table in another corner.

The mother was preparing some coffee for the children. The children aged 3 and 7, both drank coffee containing a bit of milk. Nothing more was given to them. No food was cooking, and there was no refrigerator or receptacle for food.

This mother's worry was getting enough food for the family. She could not use the gas to heat water to clean the apartment because they hadn't enough food and couldn't spend the money on gas. They received a food ticket during the winter, but they were not receiving any aid at the time of visit.

All of the children were physically dirty.

The daughter, aged 17, seemed morose and rebellious. She was ironing a sweater she had washed but which was not thoroughly clean. After ironing it, she put it on. Her short coat and her hat were of the cheapest materials, but she made an effort to look chic when she went out, and with make-up and lipstick she succeeded.

Every member of this family seemed undernourished but, except for the oldest daughter who spoke bitterly of conditions, all seemed happy and good-natured.

#### *Case 15 (Relief Case)—*

The father, aged 29, was born in the United States, spoke Italian and read Italian and English. Ordinarily he was occupied as a machine operator in a nationally known bakery concern. He had been unemployed and was being given \$10.00 a week for "made work." On this sum, a family of five, including three children, ages 6½, 5 and 3, lived.

The mother, aged 26, was born in New York City, of Italian parentage. She spoke Italian and read both Italian and English. She lived at home and was occupied as a housewife and janitress. For the latter service her monthly rental had been reduced from \$15.00 to \$6.00.

The informants (father and mother) both were harassed. The mother was about to have another baby and had not made any arrangements for a confinement. She wanted to go to a hospital, but did not know how to be taken in, as they had no money. The last time she had a baby at home she nearly died. A levatrice (mid-wife) was engaged, but she could not deliver the baby and an ambulance doctor had to be called. The mother looked ill and bedraggled. The neighbors said that she got up at four o'clock to clean the stairs.

The father showed the electric bill, which was in arrears three months. He said he pressed his own suits and cleaned his own ties. A neighbor had given the family an electric iron. The mother baked her own bread, because she could not afford baker's bread.

The mother had spoken to a neighbor of turning on the gas and killing herself and children. The father said he would not stand in line to receive relief food.

The members of the family were clean and neat. The rooms were clean and orderly.

### Cultural Backgrounds

Cultural adaptation on this block had gone a considerable distance. The great majority of the parents spoke English fluently, although they tended to speak Italian in the home,<sup>12</sup> so that the children might acquire the mother tongue.

Literacy was relatively high, although there appears to have been a considerably larger proportion of illiterates on the block

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<sup>12</sup> The statistics of the language spoken in the home were for 1926 and 1931 (1926 given first): for fathers: English only, 0-7; English and mother tongue, 46-26; mother tongue, only, 2-17; for mothers, English only, 0-9; English and mother tongue, 48-25; mother tongue only, 4-16.

in 1931 than in 1926.<sup>13</sup> In 1926 there were in all homes either foreign or American newspapers, and the parents seemed aware of the existence of a world beyond the confines of their immediate block.

The limited use of the telephone among Fleet Street families, while to a degree indicative of their economic status, also indicated their narrow social horizon. The mere fact that only five families possessed telephones in 1931<sup>14</sup> automatically limited their contacts to face-to-face relationships, and thus made the immediate community of paramount importance to these people.

The cultural interests of these families were low, particularly as indicated by the number of books in the home. The number of families having no books at all was large as compared with the literacy of the parents. Thus in 1931 only eighteen fathers and eighteen mothers, or 36% of 100 parents were totally illiterate, yet in 43, or 86% of fifty homes, there was not a single book. Only two homes contained twenty books or more, the remaining five families having less than twenty books.

Although the presence or absence of books in the home appeared to be a very definite indicator of cultural status,<sup>15</sup> other cultural evidences, such as the presence of radios, phonographs and pianos, were not so diagnostic. Among the three families

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<sup>13</sup> There appears to have been a shifting base of definition both of literacy and language acquisition among the two sets of investigations in 1926 and 1931. The 1931 investigation appears to have been more severe in its definition of literacy and of capacity to speak the English language, as it uniformly discovered greater illiteracy and greater use of a foreign language only, than did the earlier investigation. This difference was not due to a change in the population of the block. An examination of the language and literacy of those families in the survey who entered the block since the time of the original survey discloses that these families contributed proportionately to both English and foreign speaking and reading groups. Because of this apparent discrepancy, no literacy comparisons can be made for the survey years on this block.

The statistics of languages read was, in 1926 and 1931 (1926 figures given first); for fathers, English only, 34-11; English and mother tongue, 0-3; mother tongue only, 7-19; illiterate, 7-18; for mothers, English only, 25-16; English and mother tongue, 0-3; mother tongue only, 13-13; illiterate, 14-18.

<sup>14</sup> This item was not tabulated for 1926.

<sup>15</sup> The surveyors made an independent appraisal of cultural status in these families, rating them as average or low, on the basis of the case record. Of fifty families, only three were rated as having a good cultural status, and these were among the seven families that possessed books.

rated as having good cultural standards, one had a piano and two had radios. Radios were, however, relatively common among the families of low cultural standing, the total number of radios on the block being twenty-three. There were six phonographs and six upright pianos. In view of the limited communication of these people with the outside world through social organizations, the telephone and newspapers, the introduction of such large numbers of radios was highly important, offering a substitute form of social contact.

### The Role of Social Institutions in Family Life

The social lives of Fleet Street parents were extremely limited. The majority of parents had no institutional affiliations that would bring them into contact with the broad stream of contemporary American life. The one outstanding attachment of the majority of parents was the church, membership in which increased tremendously during the depression year. (Table 17, Community Organization Affiliations of Fleet Street Parents.)

Whereas approximately half of the fathers and less than one-third of the mothers reported church attendance in 1926, practically all parents of both sexes claimed church attendance in 1931. This great increase, however, does not appear to have resulted from a changed attitude toward the church, the previous investigators reporting that in 1926 fewer mothers than fathers attended church only because of home duties, not from a lack of reverence or respect. Mothers, on the contrary, regarded the church so highly that they sent their children regularly and they themselves attended services on holidays.

Only two other types of organization achieved minor gains during the survey period—labor union membership increasing among fathers from 1 to 8, and settlement house attendance among mothers increasing from 1 to 4.

Membership of fathers in Italian benefit societies dropped from 6 to 2.

Although the fathers led a relatively restricted social life, that of the mothers was even more restricted. Only six mothers had social contacts outside the home other than the church; four

attending the local settlement house in 1931 and two attending the Parent-Teachers Association at the public school in 1926. A few fathers extended their social life to include the local political club, Italian benefit societies, labor unions and fraternal associations.

TABLE 17  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AFFILIATIONS OF FLEET STREET  
PARENTS, 1926 AND 1931

<i>Organization Affiliations</i>	<i>Father</i>		<i>Mother</i>	
	1926	1931	1926	1931
Local Political Club .....	2	2	0	0
Odd Fellows .....	2	0	0	0
Italian Benefit Societies .....	6	2	0	0
Labor Union .....	1	8	0	0
Night School .....	1	0	0	0
Parent-Teachers Association ...	0	0	2	0
Settlement House .....	0	0	0	4
Church—regularly .....	7	46	8	48
Church—irregularly .....	19	0	7	0
Synagogue .....	0	2	0	1
No organization interests .....	0	1	0	0

### Attitudes Toward the Neighborhood

The majority of the residents favored the block, either wholly or in part. Only twelve of forty-eight parents who were interviewed unequivocally condemned the block and expressed a desire to move at the earliest opportunity. Of these, ten had resided on the block for more than six years. The remainder of the parents were either wholly favorable or non-committal in their attitude (19 cases), or mixed criticism with praise (17 cases). In these groups the attitudes were equally divided among old and new residents. The chief malcontents, therefore, were a small group of old residents.

The attitudes of Fleet Street residents toward their home block may be classified under the rubrics of materialistic and social reactions.

The materialistic attitudes, which include those with reference to the location of the block, the housing facilities, and rentals, were largely unfavorable. The only outstanding favorable atti-



tude was the assertion made by many that rents were low; but this was balanced by another group which claimed that rents were far too high. A few pointed out that the rents were high in proportion to the services provided by the owners.

The reactions toward housing were in practically every case condemnatory. Complaints about dirty halls and a dislike for hall and yard toilets were expressed by a majority of residents. A few criticized the darkness of the rooms and the lack of ventilation. Many complained that public baths were too far from the block for convenience. Several stated that they lived on the block only because their husbands were in business there or because they were employed in the immediate vicinity.

The social reactions to the block, which included attitudes toward other persons and racial groups on the block and toward opportunities afforded children by the location, were, on the other hand, very largely favorable. The great majority of the residents defended the block either as being free from the criminality imputed to it by non-residents or simply indicated their preference for it because of their friendships with other block residents.

Very few persons thought of the block in terms of their children. Several said that libraries were not near enough, and one parent complained that there was no nearby high school. The majority of the parents, however, thought only in the terms of their own convenience, comfort and social needs. In not a single case was spontaneous praise or approval expressed for the municipal playground just across the street. It was apparently accepted as part of the familiar scene.

Antagonism toward the Chinese appeared in a number of instances. Several parents stated that one of the advantages of the block was its relative freedom from Chinese. Others claimed that Chinese were increasingly moving in and accused them of maintaining unclean apartments.

Hardly any of the parents seemed aware of any past changes or visualized any imminent changes in the block, although one more acute parent believed that the depression was driving people of superior station into the block because of its low rentals.

In general the observations and attitudes evoked lacked acute-

ness, were at a very uncritical and concrete level, and indicated a marked provinciality and lack of knowledge of other ways of living on the part of its residents. Whether this was due solely to their narrowly circumscribed mode of living, or whether the reactions were primarily a part of generally inferior intelligence, cannot be easily determined.

It is not possible to make any direct comparison of the attitudes expressed in 1931 with the attitudes of residents in 1926, since in 1926 the point of view of all residents was not obtained. Those few residents whose views were reported in 1926 were more concerned with the needs of children, than those in 1931, and spoke of the need for a larger playground, a swimming pool, and a restriction on street traffic for the benefit of children. Several of the parents berated the Italians for a lack of initiative. One parent said:

“A swimming pool should be obtained for the neighborhood. The vacant school on Blank Street, could be developed for this, but it seems impossible to get anything through Tammany. In Tom Foley’s time it was different. The Jews on the lower East Side get everything they want, baths, park, use of public schools, etc. I don’t blame them at all; they just go ahead and get it. With Italians it is different. They haven’t the go-ahead to get what they need nor do they work to get it. The only time the Italians got anything was when the school was to be moved five blocks. Then the whole neighborhood was up in arms. They pestered the Tammany Club until the plans were given up. They were also successful in regulating traffic, but not so much. The space near the park allowed for automobiles for which they pay \$1.00 would be much better used as a play space for the children. I would like to see a good club for the boys. They need it.”

### Social Attitudes

This study has not undertaken an appraisal of social attitudes of block residents in a systematic way. Such a study could well occupy a volume by itself. In the course of the investigations, however, a number of social attitudes were evoked, a report of which may be suggestive of attitude trends among these resi-

dents. They must not, however, be regarded as adequate samplings, and are reported chiefly for their human interest.

Most significant and surprising was the small number of people who were capable of expressing social attitudes and did express them. In only eight instances out of fifty families interviewed in 1931 were well crystallized attitudes expressed on matters of general social interest. The remainder of the parents, when they did give expressions of opinion, related them solely to their own immediate economic problems.

The attitudes that were evoked can be classed as racial and civic in type. Civic attitudes were expressed in only three instances; one dealing with crime and kidnaping, another with municipal corruption, and a third with economic radicalism. One mother concerned with municipal graft, expressed the opinion that this country needed a Mussolini, citing the fact that corrupt Italian politics many years ago resulted in the death of King Victor Emmanuel's father, King Umberto. Another mother concerned with the matter of crime, felt that people were too exercised over the kidnaping of rich children, and paid too little attention to the kidnaping of poor children. She was under the impression that hundreds of poor children had been stolen without any fuss being made.

A father, concerned over economic inequalities—incidentally, this man was a former restaurant owner, and not a laborer—also felt that this country needed a Mussolini to reduce graft. He blamed the Republican Party for the acute economic conditions, and was the only one among fifty families interviewed who expressed a radical point of view. He stated that a revolution would occur in this country. "Look here," he said, pointing to the headlines of the *Daily News*, '31,000 Reds parade.' They call them Reds—they are not Reds, they are men who are hungry, who haven't any jobs."

Racial attitudes toward the Chinese were expressed only covertly in most instances. Only two mothers expressed definite attitudes toward the Chinese. One stated that the Chinese "mind their own business" but that their homes were very dirty. "They never wash their curtains—they put them up when they move in and leave them hanging when they go away."

Another woman said, "There are Chinese on this floor, and look, I keep my door open and they never bother me. If you don't bother them, they don't bother you. They are very good people, but they keep dirty houses—not exactly filthy, but very disorderly."

Another mother displayed sensitivity over the frequent connection of Italians with crime. She said that the papers always make it a point to say that the offender was an Italian. She resented the false statement, and said that this was not always true.

In two other cases attitudes were elicited that bore a relation to Italian customs—one relating to the superstitious fear of insurance, and another to the Italian pride which prompts large funerals. The latter informant said that the Italians in the neighborhood had a false standard from which their conduct sprang. It was a sort of "face" which prompted them to have such "swell" funerals. They said, she indicated, "I wouldn't have it said of me that I didn't give my mother a nice funeral." These funerals, stated the informant, often beggar a family for years. The same sense of pride, she stated, often kept women from acting as charwomen, even though their husbands were unemployed, and kept destitute families from visiting police stations or health centers in search of relief.<sup>16</sup>

### Adult Anti-Social Behavior

The crime picture on Fleet Street was affected by its geographical position on the edge of Chinatown. The block had a large proportion of Chinese residents who, while they did not figure as a direct factor in this study because practically none of them had children, nevertheless had a significant share in determining the nature of the life on the block, and made distinctive contribution to its arrest record. Several Chinese gambling houses operated steadily in this block and catered exclusively to members of their own race. While a large number of arrests were accounted for by raids on these gambling houses, it is an open question as to the influence of these arrests upon the Italian

<sup>16</sup> This was prior to the creation of a unified public relief administration.

boy population of the block. The chances are that this influence was a negligible one, for there was a dissimilarity in type of gambling between the Chinese and Italians, the Chinese being arrested for playing dominoes, an indoor game, and the Italians for shooting craps, an outdoor game in this locality. A second contribution to the arrest record by the Chinese population consisted of the use of habit-forming narcotic drugs, in violation of the Federal drug act. There was no evidence in this study to indicate a linkage between the use of the drug by Chinese and its adoption by Italian neighbors.

The crime picture was obtained from two sources—reports by the police of arrests made on the block, and from an examination of Magistrates Court dockets, for arraignments of block residents.<sup>17</sup> The police figures were larger than the court figures, since many arrested in the block had residence elsewhere.

Examination of the total of arrests on Fleet Street disclosed numerous gambling raids in 1931.<sup>18</sup> In 25 such raids, 465 arrests were made, the number of persons arrested aggregating from one to sixty in number. Next in frequency were arrests for illegal possession of narcotic drugs, the larger proportion of offenders being Chinese. Violations of the Volstead Act were

<sup>17</sup> This is not a complete picture of arrests among residents of this block, for only those dockets of nearby district courts and of the Manhattan Night Court, Family and Women's Court were studied. However, they probably comprise the bulk of the cases involving Fleet Street residents.

<sup>18</sup> This examination of court dockets for arrests of Fleet Street residents in 1926 gave the following: Felony arrests, 3; two robberies, by Italians, 1 discharged, 1 committed; one felonious assault, by an Italian, dismissed; Misdemeanors—carrying dangerous weapons; 2 Italians, 1 dismissed, 1 held for Special Sessions Court; gambling, 23 Chinese, 12 dismissed, 11 discharged; 20 Italians, 1 dismissed, 13 discharged, 3 fined, 1 sentence suspended, 2 committed; petty larceny, 5 Italians, 4 dismissed, 1 held for Special Sessions; disorderly conduct, 2 Chinese, discharged, 15 Italians, 8 dismissed, 2 discharged, 2 fined, 2 sentence suspended, 1 committed; disorderly conduct—intoxication; 1 other nationality, committed; vagrancy, 1 Chinese, dismissed; violation Corporation Ordinances, 2 Italians, fined, 4 other nationalities, 1 dismissed, 2 fined, 1 probation; violation Sanitary Code, 14 Chinese, 2 dismissed, 1 fined, 10 held for Special Sessions, 1 committed, 5 Italians, 2 fined, 2 held for Special Sessions, 1 disposition not given; 2 other nationalities, 1 fined, 1 sentence suspended; possession of drugs, 2 Chinese, held for Special Sessions; 2 Italians, 1 committed, 1 held for Special Sessions; prostitution, 1 Chinese, fined, 1 other nationality, probation; non-support, 2 Italians, no disposition, warrants withdrawn by complainants; insanity, 1 Italian, committed to hospital for observation.

also frequent and showed a marked increase in 1931 over 1926. Serious charges, such as robbery, burglary, felonious assault, grand larceny and carrying dangerous weapons were all lodged against Italians with the exception of one case, involving a Chinese.

The official police reports gave a graphic picture of the roster of crimes that occurred on the block.<sup>19</sup> Thus in 1931 disorderly conduct—using loud and boisterous language while playing Chinese dominoes—was a frequent police report. There were three arrests for bookmaking, two for possession of gambling machines, and three for possession of policy slips.<sup>20</sup>

More serious offenses were reflected in the official report of complaints to police during 1931. One complainant reported the theft of his automobile by a friend to whom he had loaned his owner's license. At 30 Fleet Street a patrolman reported shooting one Michael F. in the right buttock while the said individual was running away from the said address, at which he and another man, who made his escape, had struck the complainant on the head with a piece of pipe. At 50 Fleet Street two Italian males were arrested for holding up the complainant in the hallway of the premises and stealing \$35.00 in United States currency. An Italian from Brooklyn was arrested and charged with stabbing the complainant in the back with a three-pronged fork, complainant residing at 25 Fleet Street.

Prostitution, since the official abolition of the "segregated districts," made its appearance infrequently in this block, despite the presence of a large unmarried male Chinese population. A study of the records of the Committee of Fourteen<sup>21</sup> disclosed

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<sup>19</sup> Adult arrests in 1926 and 1931 on this block were: (1926 figures given first): Robbery, 0-1; felonious assault, 1-0; impairing morals of minor, 1-0; carrying dangerous weapon, 0-4; operating policy game, 2-6; gambling, 64-3; disorderly conduct, 0-465; compulsory prostitution, 0-2; violation National Prohibition act, 2-6; possession of narcotic drugs, 5-12; possession of abortifacient, 1-0.

<sup>20</sup> Bookmaking refers to the placing of bets on race horses; gambling machines are slot machines, operated by coins, which provide both coins and merchandise to winners; the term "policy slip" refers to the extensive lottery operated on the chance outcome of clearing house numbers.

<sup>21</sup> This organization, which disbanded in 1932, was devoted to the suppression of commercialized prostitution in New York City.

that arrests for prostitution were made at seven addresses on the Fleet Street block—three in 1926, two in 1928, one in 1929, one in 1930, and one arrest for compulsory prostitution in 1931. One arrest in 1926 was for open-door soliciting. In 1930 one girl was removed from a Chinese owned building and hospitalized for venereal infection. At one address five arrests were made between 1916 and 1926, but none since that time.

Aside from actual crime, the block had its quota of other minor social disturbances. Thus a terse police report stated that one K. W., Chinese, was removed to Bellevue Hospital suffering from some self-inflicted poison and died at 3:50 A.M. One Chinese was reported overcome by illuminating gas escaping from a gas heater. One Italian at 70 Fleet Street was reported missing by his wife. One Italian at 40 Fleet Street reported that her brother had left home at 3:00 A.M. and had not returned. At 20 Fleet Street one Chinese reported his daughter to be missing. At 50 Fleet Street an Italian reported his daughter, age fifteen, missing. Three wives haled their husbands into the Court of Domestic Relations in 1926 and 1927. Two wives apparently relented and failed to press the charges, but in the third case the erring husband, age 27, was placed on probation and ordered to pay support in the sum of \$13.00 per week. All three complainants were Italian women.

#### Attitudes of Residents

Comments of residents of the block indicated a paucity of information on criminal behavior of block members, and were probably a true indication of the lack of criminality within this block. There was a marked absence of gossip concerning the criminal reputations of people on the block. Several residents expressed resentment that their neighbors were considered tough. One resident stated he had heard that certain concerns would not employ an applicant from this neighborhood.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE CHILD

#### Education

EDUCATION was reported in 1926 as having more significance for the Fleet Street boys than for those on Tyler Street. Among boys it meant preparation for life and a stepping-stone to better positions and greater opportunities. Many parents encouraged their boys in their aspirations, not only in spirit, but by making financial sacrifices as well. On the other hand, there were parents who encouraged their children to evade the compulsory school laws, particularly those relating to continuation school. The most frequent explanation for a negative attitude on the part of parents was economic difficulties. Some boys attended high school for a few months, just long enough to be known as "attending school," knowing they would probably escape being followed up by the school and would thus avoid having to attend continuation school. (Table 18, Educational Status of Fleet Street School Boys.)

In 1926, ten boys in the elementary school group were seriously considering attending high school, and one boy even had his goal set at the college level. Of the six boys in high school, every one hoped to attend college, although only three had definite ambitions. Two of these boys wished to be doctors or pharmacists. One boy in college intended to become a physician. In general, the goals were membership in a recognized conservative professional group. None of the boys wished to be musicians, artists, or authors.

The block afforded striking contrasts in attitude toward education. Thus, one boy in college in 1926 was there on a three-year scholarship. He was the gifted child of the family, and great sacrifices were made by the other members of the family to



TABLE 18  
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF FLEET STREET SCHOOL BOYS

Type of Education	Totals		Ages						18- Over			
			4-5		6-9		10-14		15-17			
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>Secular Education:</i>												
Kindergarten—Public . . . . .	1	4	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kindergarten—Parochial . . . . .	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elementary Public School . . . . .	51	42	0	0	21	19	29	22	1	1	0	0
Elementary Parochial School . . . . .	4	8	0	0	3	6	1	2	0	0	0	0
High School . . . . .	6	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	2	1	1
Continuation School . . . . .	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	2
College . . . . .	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
<i>Religious Education:</i>												
Church—regularly . . . . .	53	40	0	2	16	12	30	13	5	5	2	8
Church—irregularly . . . . .	0	20	0	2	0	5	0	7	0	3	0	3
Sunday School . . . . .	1	9	1	2	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	1
Instruction—Roman Catholic . . . . .	36	28	0	0	10	13	24	10	1	4	1	1
<i>Cultural Education:</i>												
Music . . . . .	5	2	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	1	0
<i>Through other resources:</i>												
Library . . . . .	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0

give him a clear educational track. His sister, a bright girl, was forced to give up trade school, and the mother had to become a janitress. Even the father, who made his own wine and got drunk once a week regularly, was proud of the boy.

In contrast, there may be cited the case of a physically mature sixteen year old boy, who quit continuation school and obtained a full-time job—secured by means of a false age record. He earned \$20.00 a week until the truant officer discovered him and arraigned both the father and son in court, causing the latter to be fined. The father pointed out that the boy's salary bought him his winter clothing, and stated that if he could afford it, he would move his family to Brooklyn, where the continuation school follow-up was not strict.

A fourteen year old boy, not yet graduated from grammar school, had a long range point of view. He planned to attend

Stuyvesant High School and utilize a capacity for drawing by becoming an architect.

Parental attitudes toward education were not so frequently elicited in 1931 as in 1926, but the evidences are that whatever the parental attitudes, the ambitions of the 1926 public school boys did not bear fruit, for in 1931, although the great majority of the boys were the same as had lived in the block in 1926, not a single one was in college, and but three were in high school. In addition to these, five had attended high school in past years, but had dropped out. The conclusion may be drawn, therefore, that the period of economic depression blasted the hopes of higher education of children on this block, and during the five-year period reduced the educational level of the block to that of elementary school. (Table 19, Past Educational Status of Fleet Street Boys.)

TABLE 19  
PAST EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF FLEET STREET BOYS

Type of Education	Totals		Ages									
			4-5		6-9		10-14		15-17		18- Over	
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>Secular Education:</i>												
Elementary School—non-graduate .....	4	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1
Elementary School—graduate ..	6	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	3	3
Continuation School .....	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	3	2
High School—non-graduate ..	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	2
University—non-graduate ....	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Religious Education:</i>												
Instruction—Roman Catholic..	28	10	0	0	0	1	12	1	8	6	8	2

The number of boys between the ages of six and seventeen years in elementary school remained approximately the same for both 1926 and 1931. In 1926, 62 of 76 boys, or 81%, while in 1931, 53 of 67, or 79%, attended school. Whereas parochial school attendance increased slightly, the number of boys in high school dropped from six to three, and in college from one to none. The number of children attending public kindergartens,

however, increased sharply—from one reported in 1926 to four reported by parents and eleven reported by schools in 1931.

Religious education, however, not only withstood the depression, but rode against the tide. Church attendance increased from 53 who attended regularly in 1926 to 60 who attended church both regularly and irregularly in 1931. Sunday School enrollment gained, and only Roman Catholic instruction showed a decrease from 36 to 28 children. All of the losses here reported, however, must be offset by a 12% loss in child population of school age between the two survey years.

### Retardation

Retardation among Fleet Street children was excessive. In 1931 among 58 elementary school children, 12 were at grade, six were accelerated one term, and forty were retarded, but of these forty, twenty-six were retarded only one term. Among the remaining fourteen, three were very late entrants. Gross retardation, however, was 69%, in contrast to 21.4% among all public school pupils in New York City. Similarly, acceleration was 10%, in comparison with 33.8% for all public school pupils.

### Boys' Attitudes Toward School

The majority of the Fleet Street boys interviewed in 1931, representing all ages from 8 to 19, expressed a positive liking for school. Only seven of twenty-seven expressed themselves unfavorably and of these boys, two were in continuation school. None of the seven could give any reason for their dislike. Only one boy indicated a specific basis for the dislike, that he had failed to pass because his teacher had a grudge against him.

The few boys attending high school and college gave evidence of superior home background or an unusual attitude of sacrifice on the part of their parents. Thus, two brothers, 17 and 18, were attending high school largely through parental sacrifice. The whole family was eating only one meal a day in order to keep the boys in school.

The mother of a boy of 15, an Italian born woman who came

to this country in infancy and attended school in the United States, took an unusually active interest in his studies, and even corrected his English compositions.

Education did not figure in the plans of boys who had already left school and were among the jobless. Not a single one expressed a desire or evinced an interest in returning to school until times might improve; all seemed intent upon securing employment. Hardly any of the boys had specific goals. The only college boy on the block in 1926 was ambitious to become an accountant. One unemployed boy would have studied aviation if he could have afforded it. Another boy wished to follow a trade when he completed high school. One boy, unable to find work, wished to become an electrician. The others had neither special ambition nor interest in a specific future. There was great interest, however, in securing work and having an income, and this interest appeared to have been enhanced by parental pressure. There was no evidence of vocational guidance either by parents or by school authorities.

### Cultural Education

The cultural horizon of Fleet Street boys was a limited one. In general, they had no intellectual interests and their reading was confined to the daily newspaper and occasional cheap magazines. The period between 1926 and 1931 saw no significant change in this respect; the depression merely intensified the cultural isolation of the block. Thus, whereas in 1926, five boys were obtaining musical training and four were utilizing the public library, in 1931 only two boys were receiving musical education and none used the library.

### Continuation School

The number of boys complying with the continuation school law did not vary materially between the two survey years. In 1926, of nine boys, ages 15-17 years, three attended; in 1931 of eleven boys in the same age group, four attended. The attitude expressed toward continuation school in 1926 by many of the

boys and many of their parents, was not favorable. Several complained that continuation school taught them nothing. One boy said, "You can't learn anything there and just fool around in the school—so I want to quit. If a truant officer comes after me I will go to work on my uncle's farm in New Jersey." Another boy said, "I didn't learn much in the continuation school. They just put you at the typewriter and say just learn how to use it from the book."

### Health and Physical Handicaps

The health status of Fleet Street boys appeared to have suffered somewhat during the period of depression, to judge from a comparison of data derived from interviews in 1926 and 1931. This conclusion was drawn with hesitancy, because of the small number of cases involved and of the possibility that the same emphasis on health was not made in the interviewing procedure during both survey years. The 1931 re-survey covered minor health disabilities, such as carious teeth, in addition to major health needs. Including all types of physical disability, thirty-seven boys were reported as having physical handicaps in 1931, as opposed to only twelve in 1926. However, eliminating thirteen cases of boys who, in 1931, required dental care (this disability not having been reported in 1926), and eliminating seven children reported as being apparently malnourished, the remaining total of cases is not appreciably larger than those reported in 1926. The indications are, at least, that the health standards of the block have been, in past years, and still are, very low.

A variety of mental and physical disabilities handicapped Fleet Street boys.

In 1926, four cases of mental deficiency, and in 1931 one case of probable mental deficiency and one case of chorea, were reported. The mentally deficient children all created severe adjustment problems. An eleven year old boy, who attended school only two years, was expelled as too troublesome to keep in school. The teacher recommended his commitment to an institution, but this the father refused to do. A private specialist

recommended that the child be allowed to stay out of doors as much as possible, a form of advice which appears to have been, under the circumstances, more or less of a "Hobson's choice."

Another boy, age seventeen, described by his father as being "dumb and thick," had in the past been in an institution for mental defectives. He attended school only four years, and subsequently worked irregularly as a shoe shiner. The father was not unkind, but failed to understand the boy's deficiencies.

A more serious situation existed in still another family where two boys, ages sixteen and eighteen, were probably mental defective, although no mental tests had been made. The older boy refused to work at a steady job, rejecting jobs which his friends sought to give him. He worked irregularly at a public market, earning an occasional dollar, which he kept for himself, and spent the rest of his time idling in a local candy store.

The sixteen year old brother was allowed to remain out of school on the common consent of school authorities that he was not bright. He occasionally worked on a pushcart, but spent most of his time on a nearby roof with a friend, flying pigeons. The family in this case was actually in need, both the father and mother having been chronic invalids. A well known family welfare society withdrew its relief subsidy to this family, however, because the two boys refused to submit to a mental examination and because the mother refused to "kick both boys out," as requested by the agency.

In 1931 there appeared only one case of possible mental deficiency, in a child of three, whose parents claimed he appeared to understand everything that was said to him, but could not speak. This child had been a patient at Vanderbilt Clinic.

Closely allied to mental disturbance was a case of chorea in a child of six, an aftermath of whooping-cough. This child's condition, involving nervousness and hyper-activity, was a source of irritation to his ignorant mother, who treated him as an incorrigible, rather than as a sick child. The mother, in this instance, candidly admitted that she disliked the child because of his "badness." No medical treatment had been instituted.

Cases of constitutional diseases were more frequently reported in 1926 than in 1931. There were two cases of cardiac disease

and two cases of suspected syphilis. One of the cardiacs also had a congenital syphilitic complication of which the boy was not aware until he made application for an employment certificate after graduation from public school. He had been on the track team at public school, but had had no examination, so was not aware of his cardiac ailment. He was placed under Salvarsan treatment by a private physician, receiving injections three times a week at \$3.00 each.

In another family an eighteen year old boy was reported to have cardiac disease, but was not under medical care.

Two boys, ages ten and thirteen, whose father had paralysis of syphilitic origin, reported at intervals to Board of Health clinics for Wasserman examinations which were negative.

In 1931 a boy of eight and a half died of tuberculosis one month prior to the field interview, after fourteen months of illness. The family lived in a three-room apartment, one room of which had a window. The kitchen and bedroom were without windows or other means of ventilation.

Two orthopædic cases were reported in 1926. One, a boy of fourteen, had been treated for a disease of the hip joint and had spent seven years at the Daisy Fields Home for Crippled Children. At the time of interview he had fully recovered and was attending high school. A thirteen year old boy with paralysis of the left arm and a deformity of the foot, was undergoing clinical treatment. In 1931, only one orthopædic case was reported, that of a boy of nineteen, who had worn a plaster cast for one year. His parents were unable to describe his condition accurately.

No visual defects were reported in 1926, but in 1931 a boy, aged ten, was reported with defective vision in one eye, for which he was not receiving treatment. Another, a child of five, had strabismus (cross eye) and his mother had been told he required glasses, but she had had to neglect the child for lack of money.

No injuries were reported in 1926, but in 1931, one boy of twenty-one lost a finger while working in a shoe factory as a last picker. A boy of thirteen was in Beekman Street Hospital for four months after sustaining a broken leg when run down by a taxicab in front of his home.

No cases of acute illness were reported in 1926, and only one in 1931, a child of three who was ill with chicken-pox at the time of visit. The interviewer discovered the child fully dressed in bed, and covered with dirty bed-clothes. Another child of six had recently had whooping-cough.

No doubt there were other cases of acute illness which were not reported. In 1931 several cases were reported as requiring or having had surgical care. A boy of sixteen had refused a tonsillectomy ordered by the Board of Health. A child of twelve had been reported for mastoid infection, and was an invalid since the operation. A child of five had undergone a tonsillectomy at the hands of a private physician. The need of dental care, as indicated before, was wide-spread, and was apparent to the majority of the families questioned. One boy, age twelve, required orthodontia.

Poor nutrition was not reported by parents in 1926, nor in 1931, but in the latter year the case interviewer noted in eight instances that children appeared obviously undernourished. In 1926 one child did bring a slip home from school stating that he had defective tonsils and was undernourished. This child had had pneumonia during the winter, and his busy mother reported, "He don't want to go out with the children and he don't care for any eats." There was no school follow-up on this case.

The 1931 report on health appears to have covered all ailments known to the families concerned, as all the other children on the block were specifically reported upon as being in good health.

In 1926 a six month old boy with a serious and repulsive facial eruption was without medical care, because ignorant neighbors had influenced the mother against taking the child to a hospital.

In 1924 a health study of the Mulberry district, which embraces Fleet Street, was made by a Family Welfare Society, based on mortality data for the years 1916-1920 inclusive.<sup>1</sup> The findings indicated a high proportion of disease in this neighborhood, approximately one person out of twenty being reported sick in a

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<sup>1</sup> *The Health of the Neighborhood*, by John C. Gebhart, Director, Department of Social Welfare, New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (1924).



study of 32,000 individuals. The death rates for different age groups were unusually high, particularly among children under one year of age—138.1 per thousand population. Respiratory diseases, including pulmonary tuberculosis, were the chief causes of death, the incidence being 50% higher than the rate for New York City as a whole. Pneumonia, a primary cause of death among children between the ages of one and four, was responsible for nearly half of the deaths of children of these ages. This unusual mortality from pneumonia was attributed by the surveyor to the after effects of rickets upon young children, and to the disinclination on the part of the population to carry out modern methods of treatment, particularly as regards ventilation, bringing fatal results in many cases where, with proper treatment, the prognosis was hopeful.

Pulmonary tuberculosis, the greatest cause of mortality among adults, had an alarmingly high death rate, 3.10, which was more than twice that for New York City as a whole. There was a comparatively low mortality among mothers from causes associated with child birth, and among babies from causes associated with neglect during the prenatal period and during delivery.

### School Physical Examinations

Public schools did not function as a preventive health agency for the children of this block. A markedly high proportion of the school children from Fleet Street had not received a physical examination by Department of Health physicians up to the 1931 resurvey. In 1931 the surveyors, examining the official record cards of 78 school boys listed as resident on this block, discovered that only 18 had the findings of physical examinations recorded on their cards; the remainder were blank and, as far as could be learned, the schools were not aware of the physical status of the remaining 60 children.

That the sphere of the school in preventive health work was drastically limited by this failure to conduct routine examinations, may be grasped from the amount of ill health found among the small number of children examined. Not a single child was free from defect, the average being 2.3 defects per child. Ten

had carious teeth, 9 had defective nutrition and 11 had defective vision. Hypertrophied tonsils and obstructed nasal breathing were likewise frequent defects. In only a small proportion of the cases was improvement noted by the examiners at successive examinations. The number of cases reported was too small to admit of any final conclusions, but indicated the need for competent routine school examinations of all of the school children in this area.

Despite the availability of free medical service, only a very small proportion of the boys underwent health examinations at other health centers and hospitals. Six were reported as having had Board of Health examinations, of which two were in connection with the granting of employment certificates. Two other boys received medical examinations, also under educational auspices—one at continuation school and one at New York University. Only two other boys made use of other community health services—one using Beekman Street Hospital and the other using a community house on Market Street.

### Employment

The employed boys on Fleet Street were too small a group to justify detailed statistical comparisons. Certain outstanding constants and changes were recorded, however, for the two survey years. The boys on this block, contrary to the findings in other blocks, did not represent a distinct vocational advance over their fathers who were engaged in relatively diversified occupational pursuits, almost a half of them having left the ranks of unskilled labor.<sup>2</sup> Among the boys, the same proportion of skilled and

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<sup>2</sup> Full-time employment was reported in 1926 by 28 boys, of whom 6 were under 16; and in 1931 by 6, all over 16. In 1926 three boys were helpers in skilled trades, auto-mechanics, electrical, and photo-engraving; two were workers in semi-skilled occupations, 1 a truck chauffeur and 1 a shoe operative; one was an office clerk, 1 a store salesman, and 21 were in unskilled occupations, such as errand and bundle boys, truck helper, boot-black, newsboys. There was no obvious competition between opportunity and earnings. Two learners in skilled trades and 9 unskilled workers earned over \$10.00 a week, but twelve unskilled earned under \$10.00 a week. Three semi-skilled and office workers earned over \$20.00 a week. In 1931, there were no helpers in skilled trades; 1 shoe operative, 2 store salesmen, and 3 unskilled workers, as errand boy and bootblack. Only one earned over \$10.00 a week.

unskilled employment was found in industrial occupations. Hardly any were in clerical positions.

None of the boys had any apparent vocational guidance in their choice of work, as was shown by their manner of securing employment. Both in 1926 and 1931 the typical manner of securing employment was through walking the streets or through recommendations of friends. The use of newspapers and of public employment agencies was practically unknown.<sup>8</sup>

The effect of the depression may be seen in the increase in the number of unemployed boys in 1931 as compared to 1926, and in the absence of jobs with opportunity for advancement. In the year of prosperity, only 2 of 30 boys of working age were unemployed, but in the depression year 16 of 22 boys of working age were unemployed. In 1926, 6 of 21 boys had chances for advancement—3 were helpers in skilled trades, 2 were errand boys, 1 in a printing shop and 1 in a bank; and 1 boy was a clerk in an insurance company. In 1931, 21 out of 22 boys had blind-alley jobs, with no chance for advancement.

The economic depression played utter havoc with the average Fleet Street boy, either placing him entirely out of employment or reducing his income to a very low level. The handful who did have employment in 1931 earned much less than did the boys of the same age group in 1926. In the year of prosperity, 28 boys had incomes ranging from less than \$5.00 up to \$30.00 per week; 8 of the 28 boys had salaries of \$15.00 and over. In 1931, however, the earnings of the six employed boys ranged from less than \$5.00 to \$14.00. Not a single boy earned above that amount and only one boy earned within the \$10.00-\$14.00 class. Three earned from \$5.00 to \$9.00, one earned less than \$5.00 per week, and one had no income, but merely helped his brother.

Surprisingly few evidences of loss of morale as a result of unemployment were noted. However, since the survey was made in 1931, in the early stages of the depression, rather than in 1933, at its depth, it may well be that a subsequent follow-up would have disclosed greater obvious psychological resultants

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<sup>8</sup> Employment sources reported in 1926 and 1931 (1926 figures given first): inquiries, 6-7; relatives and friends, 6-3; newspaper ads., 1-0.

of enforced idleness. At the time of re-survey, boys had apparently not given up the fond hope that "prosperity was just around the corner," and were still seeking jobs. An additional factor contributing to the persistence of morale was probably the still relatively adequate economic status of half of the families in this block.

Not a single unemployed boy was making adequate use of his free time for purposes of vocational or cultural training. The usual statement regarding their activities was that they spent their days looking for work, getting up early in the morning and coming home early in the evening and going to bed. These statements more or less checked with the findings that practically no boys were members of social clubs in 1931. The elimination of their spending money had apparently reduced good times and had limited their lives to job seeking. Only two of the boys appeared to have been unemployed for long periods—one boy of 18 was unemployed two years and one boy of 19 was unemployed 17 months.

Another marked effect of the depression was the practically complete elimination of part-time work for younger boys. Among 83 boys under the age of sixteen, 14 engaged in part-time occupations in 1926, whereas in 1931 only four of 82 boys were so occupied. The surveyors in 1926 commented upon the dominance of economic responsibility in the home training of Fleet Street children, stating that the boys at that time had a wholesome attitude toward work, many of them recognizing the economic need of the family at a very early age, and contributing their share toward the family budget. Even before they could earn money, they either helped their fathers on pushcarts or in the store, or aided their mothers in janitorial work. Some boys assumed the entire responsibility for obtaining kindling wood for fuel. Just as soon as they were big enough, even though not legally of age, they got whatever jobs they could, and in some families they were expected, through shoeshining or newspaper selling, to earn their "eats." Thus in 1926 two errand boys under sixteen stood outside their respective clothing stores and induced wavering prospective customers to enter. One boy worked before and after school and Saturday and Sunday on his father's pushcart, without

pay. "He gets his eats, a place to sleep and movies on Sunday," said his mother, not unkindly. One boy helping his father in the bakery was evading continuation school, but was learning the baking trade. His employment, for which he received no pay except movie money, was from 6:00 P.M. to midnight and from 4:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. The shoe-shiners worked as long as they could get customers, sometimes getting home as late as eight or nine o'clock in the evening. They always worked on Sunday in good weather. Competition was keen, and bootblacks went as far as City Hall in their search for customers.

The gathering of wood, which in many families constituted the primary source of fuel, was in most instances relegated to the younger boys, after school and on Saturday mornings. Groups of boys, homeward bound, carrying great bundles of wood, were often seen.

### Leisure Time Activities

Fleet Street boys had advantages of a type not available to children in other more congested blocks. Their homes were not as overcrowded as some; the street had no public market to impede play, there was ample play space as the block faced upon a two and one-half acre municipal playground and the child population was relatively small in comparison to the total block population due to the presence of large numbers of childless Chinese. (Table 20, Recreational Activities of Fleet Street Boys, in Age-groups.)

### The Home

As a play center for older children the home, in this block as in others, ran a poor last in competition with the street, playgrounds and commercial amusements. In 1926 only four boys had radios at home, then more or less of a novelty, which led to visits from boy friends. Five boys received instruction on stringed instruments in that year, but it is questionable whether this may be classed under the heading of play.

In 1931 only three boys were recorded as centering their play

TABLE 20  
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF FLEET STREET BOYS, IN AGE GROUPS, 1926-1931

Type of Recreation	Ages											
	Totals		2-5 Years		6-9 Years		10-14 Years		15-17 Years		18-21 Years	
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
<i>Outdoor:</i>												
Local municipal playgrounds	83		14	12	26	23	31	27	11	11	6	10
Local parks	5		1	..	1	..	2	..	1	..	..	..
Street, yards	83		7	7	26	16	35	23	10	4	5	4
Roof	3		2	..	..	2	..	2	1	..	..	..
<i>Un-supervised Clubs:</i>												
Baseball clubs	18		..	..	..	..	14	..	4	..	..	..
Punch-ball club	2		..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..
Social clubs	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
Other	3		..	..	..	..	3	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Supervised Recreation:</i>												
Church clubs	46		..	..	4	1	36	8	6	6	..	7
Settlement House clubs	8		..	..	..	..	1	..	3	..	4	..
Public School clubs	9		..	..	..	..	7	..	1	..	1	..
<i>Commercial Recreations:</i>												
Motion pictures	79		4	..	20	2	33	6	12	3	10	6
Other theatres	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	..
Pool rooms	5		..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	..
Cafes	4		..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	3	..
<i>Summer recreation:</i>												
Camp	1	8	..	..	..	3	1	3	..	2	..	..
County and shore	10	11	2	1	2	2	3	4	2	2	1	2
Organized outings	5	4	..	..	..	..	5	2	..	..	..	2
Family outings	24	8	3	1	7	3	8	1	3	1	3	2
Swimming—seashore	30	25	..	..	1	..	21	4	4	7	4	14
Swimming—pools and fountains	..	9	..	..	..	..	8	..	..	..	1	..

activities in the home—one devoting himself to the violin, and another, the son of an accordion maker, to playing the accordion. The third boy, who had marked artistic abilities, spent considerable time at home drawing with crayons.

Within the home some attempt was made to provide recreation by means of self-playing instruments, such as the victrola and the radio. An effect of prosperity was to increase the number of radios. The proportion of radios and victrolas in the block almost reversed itself in the five year period. In 1926, of thirty self-playing instruments, four were radios and twenty-six were victrolas. In 1931, however, there were only six victrolas and twenty-three radios. From a knowledge of the methods of instalment houses, one would venture the guess that these residents had traded in their victrolas as part payment on radios.

Few homes boasted of games or books. In 1931,<sup>4</sup> only seven homes possessed books, and of these, only two had more than twenty volumes. No toys were noted on Fleet Street in 1926, but by 1931 nine children, all below the age of 10, had their own toys.

### Outdoor Play

The majority of boys were fond of outdoor play, and constantly used the street as their natural play place, despite the dangers of heavy street traffic. Handball was a favored street game both in 1926 and 1931. A few boys even ventured to dodge in and out of traffic on bicycles hired at 30¢ an hour.

Despite the presence of a large playground at their very door step, the mass pressure of children from other blocks made it impossible for Fleet Street children to spend more than an average of an hour per day in the play ground, and in both 1926 and 1931 a large proportion of boys named the street as their usual habitat.

Among 30 forms of street play, base-ball easily led, being mentioned as a play interest by fourteen boys. Only two boys named punch-ball and hand-ball, and four younger boys named marbles. One boy named "kick the can," a variation of soccer

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<sup>4</sup> No figures for 1926.

foot-ball. Two boys played "cops and crooks." One boy mentioned "hide and seek." Street play equipment was most limited among these children, very few of the younger boys having any street toys at all. A few boys owned roller skates.

The energies of mothers were devoted, apparently, to making the street a safer play place, rather than toward herding their children into the adjacent park playground. In 1926 the mothers signed a petition to have their street designated as a "play street," and were successful in limiting somewhat the extent of street traffic. The traffic situation, however, continued and many boys, instead of going to the playground on which their home street faced, traveled blocks away from the home neighborhood, some to the shaded areas under the Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges, where they played until chased by police. During the summer when the sun beat down upon the unshaded and unprotected street and the similarly unprotected playground, shaded unsupervised play areas were especially sought.

Very few children resorted to backyards or roofs, the former being filled with débris and unfit for play, and the latter being considered unsafe, although a few mothers living on top floors took their younger boys to the roof to avoid the climb of five flights to and from the street.

### Independent Clubs

Twelve self-organized clubs were active in 1926, bearing such names as Rovers, White Eagles, Smiling Trio, Ku Klux Klan and Boy Scout Gang. These clubs were no different in inception from those under supervised auspices, but, in distinction to the latter, they had not grown beyond the street as a natural home, and did not seek adult guidance. In 1926 there were 8 self-organized base-ball clubs, whose major ambition was to own their own uniforms. These teams engaged in competition, often with boys from other blocks. The Smiling Trio, a cup-winning punch-ball team, often played indoors as well as out of doors and met in a pool room run by a college student.

In 1931 the same zest for competitive team games displayed



itself as in 1926, but there was no evidence of the organization of clubs and no ambition to purchase suits.

Three self-organized groups called *Knights Kingly*, *Boy Scout Gang* and *Ku Klux Klan*, were the idea of boys from ten to twelve years old who ganged together. "The Knights Kingly," said a thirteen year old member, "meets in my back yard. We don't do no robbin' in my gang. Jimmie, who is in my catechism class, told you we did, but we don't no more. The big boys used to take us down to City Hall and tell us to pinch chocolate. We don't no more. The Sisters in my club at church told us not to rob and not to tell lies. I am the president. I say to the boys, if you'se see a lady fall down you'se pick her up. If you'se don't, you can't belong to de club. Then de club (meeting) busts up. I hang pictures on de fence to make de meeting nice, but de kids tear them down. I do it just like we do it at church." He was also a member of the *Boy Scout Gang*, which had no special purpose, except that the members hoped to become Boy Scouts.

An eleven year old was the leader of the eight members of the *Ku Klux Klan*, which met in a nearby backyard. As the leader's thirteen year old brother said, "They talk only about money-making. Each chips in whatever they make or get in the week, and at the end of the week they divide it among their gang. In winter they meet in the hallway. They go to movies together, play ball together, and in the summer go swimming in City Hall fountain together. They pick up empty boxes and sell them to make money for their club." This boy made unreasonable demands of his mother for money and she, fearing he might steal, yielded to his demands.

Although no youthful clubs were reported in 1931, one older boy was a member of the *Silver Cloud Dancing Club*, and another belonged to the *Chinatown Nut Club*, described by its member as an athletic club, not a gang.

### Supervised Recreation

The supervised recreations most often attended by the Fleet Street boys were municipal playgrounds, clubs at a nearby

Catholic Church and miscellaneous clubs at settlements and in elementary and high schools.

As hitherto noted, adjacent to this block was Columbus Park, consisting of a two and one-half acre level tract, the greater part of which was occupied by a well-equipped children's playground, surrounded by a high wire fence. The apparatus was distributed along the fence in a semi-circle, and consisted of swings, jungle bars, see-saws, slides and a sand box. At one end of the playground was a large pavilion and shelter with a concrete floor, built in 1928. Within the shelter were a play-room and the office of the playground director, in addition to a large covered play space. The play-room was not available for winter play, being poorly insulated and very cold.

Surrounding the playground on all four sides were fenced patches of trees and grass that threw ample shade over the benches which lined the outside of the wire enclosure. At one end of the park stood a concrete pavilion for the use of mothers and babies, and comfort stations for men and women. Because of the proximity of the park to the Bowery, its benches were almost always filled by large numbers of homeless and unemployed men. Most of these had no influence on the children, but some, being drunk and objectionable in their behavior, were a harmful influence.

An unpublished survey of Columbus Park, made by the author in 1929, measured the child attendance of this playground on a pleasant summer day, from morning to night, in terms of sex, age, and residence. During the day a total of 570 children—286 boys and 284 girls—visited the playground. Of these, 183 children, 91 boys and 92 girls, made a second visit during the day, and 67 children made three or more visits during the day. The majority of the children traveled less than a quarter of a mile from their homes to the park. The playground was almost entirely limited to the use of children under 16, the greatest numbers consisting of children below the age of 13. A measure taken of the average length of stay in the playground, revealed that 68½% of the boys made but a single visit to the playground, and remained an average of forty-two minutes; 21% made a second visit that lasted on the average fifty-four minutes. The

figures for girls were very similar. Seventy of the children were residents of the Fleet Street block, which checked rather closely with the number of children who named Columbus Park as a play place both in 1926 and in 1931, and indicated that the average child from that street played in this park for an average period of an hour, almost daily.

Daily visits by field workers to this park on week days, Sundays and evenings, emphasized the survey findings as to the popularity and also the inadequacy of this play space. The play here often became so strenuous that mothers with babies and little children were forced to leave, not only because of the danger of flying base-balls, but because of the vast quantities of dust raised. Although a large space was fenced off as a ball ground, the ball players monopolized almost the entire park, particularly on Sundays, when boys over sixteen engaged in competitive sports. Smaller boys complained that the larger boys monopolized the field on Saturday afternoons and holidays. During recess periods, boys from Public School 23 played there, accompanied by a teacher.

In a few instances playgrounds and parks beyond the immediate neighborhood were used by Fleet Street children. Boot-blacks trekked to Battery Park, where they sought customers and swam in the floating baths.

### Indoor Supervised Recreation

In 1926 supervised indoor recreation, particularly under the auspices of the neighborhood Catholic Church, had gained a considerable membership among the boys of the block. Sixty-four boys were then members of clubs under adult supervision, in contrast to thirty-four boys who had been members in prior years. In 1931, however, the trend was in the reverse direction. Church club memberships had dropped from 46 to 15. Memberships in local independent clubs dropped from 8 in 1926 to none in 1931. Extra-curricular elementary and high school activities likewise suffered a loss, none being recorded in 1931, as compared

with nine memberships in 1926.<sup>5</sup> None of the supervised programs made any appeal to children below the age of ten, the greatest appeal having been among boys between the ages of ten and fourteen years.

High school boys and others receiving catechism instructions at the Catholic Church were attracted to the activities there in 1926. The Catholic Boys Brigade of the Church included nine boys. A former member of this same Brigade said, "I left because they commenced to take in so many little boys and because it did not make me anything. I got a merit but I didn't get the stripes they promised me, which would have meant I would have charge of a regiment. Anyway, I like my new club better." (In the same church.)

The Church Club for boys and the Junior Holy Name Society, the latter religious in purpose, also attracted a number of boys. Membership in these clubs entitled boys to the use of the gymnasium, pool, and athletic equipment. The church succeeded in reaching boys for recreational purposes, to some extent, because parental reverence for the church overcame their ignorant opposition to club affiliation for their children.

The James Club, about three blocks away, attracted five boys from 15 to 19 years old with its athletic activities, gymnasium and showers.

There were no Boy Scouts on Fleet Street, although a number of boys expressed the desire to belong to a troop. In several instances in 1931 the cost of the uniform was prohibitive.

Among the younger boys, two belonged to *The Knighthood of Youth*. A thirteen year old boy said, "It learns you to be honest and truthful." One boy was out for the *School Track Team*, and hoped to enter field day activities.

### Summer Recreations

Summer recreations for Fleet Street boys consisted primarily of swimming and family outings at nearby beaches. In addition,

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<sup>5</sup> The actual losses were not quite as great as statistics would indicate, there being a proportion of duplications, since some boys belonged to more than one club activity.

boys swam at every available place, such as Coney Island, Battery Park and the Civic Virtue Fountain in City Hall Park. A smaller number of boys went to the country for the summer, and a still lesser group went to supervised summer camps for short periods.

Camping privileges, enjoyed by only one boy in 1926, were extended to eight in 1931. The large number of boys who expressed regret at not being able to attend camp in 1931 indicated an increased trend toward summer camping, and a wider acceptance by parents of recreations that took children away from the supervision of the home.

#### Play Life Changes Between 1926 and 1931

A comparison of play statistics for 1926 and 1931 disclosed certain important changes during the period. Play places were more restricted in 1931. In 1926 the great majority of the children centered their play life about the home block—but a small proportion went further afield. In 1931 no boy was reported as leaving the home block or the home neighborhood for play purposes. This may perhaps be attributed to the effects of the depression in reducing spending money. But depression appeared to have consistently affected other phases of boyhood play life. The movies suffered especially, only 17 boys being reported as consistent movie goers in 1931, in contrast to 79 in 1926. Self-organized clubs, usually involving small expenditures for membership fees, dues and for base-ball equipment, uniforms, etc., were numerous in 1926, but were practically absent in 1931, with the exception of two social clubs among boys over 18. Similarly, membership in supervised clubs, neighborhood and parish houses declined to a bare handful in 1931. Day outings for the family decreased in number—24 boys enjoying them in 1926 and only 8 in 1931. Swimming at Coney Island, however, did not decrease much in popularity, and camp attendance and country visits increased somewhat.

### Attitudes Toward Block

An attempt was made to discover the attitudes of Fleet Street boys toward their home block, but because of their inarticulateness, it was only with great difficulty that their attitudes toward the life they led and the block they lived in could be elicited. Their views as to making the block a better place to live in centered entirely around thoughts of play and recreation. So similar were these expressions of opinion in 1926, that there is some doubt as to whether or not the interviewer used leading questions. The majority of requests were for a neighborhood swimming pool and showers, a neighborhood club, a local bath house, a playground for bigger boys, a gymnasium, and a Boy Scout troop. The children were thus acutely aware of their own particular play needs and thought of the neighborhood only to the extent that it cramped their play tendencies.

### Commercial Recreations

The only commercial attractions on the block were several cafes and pool rooms, and the commercial recreations patronized by boys from this block were all outside of the block boundaries. The great majority, however, were within the immediate neighborhood and consisted of motion picture theatres, pool rooms and cafes. The motion picture theatre made the greatest appeal, but, as indicated elsewhere, the depression caused a great slump in patronage from 79 boys in 1926 to 17 in 1931. The greatest decrease, as may be expected, was among boys below working age. In 1926, boys attended from two or three times a week, and always on Sunday. "If they don't have the money, their friends treat them," remarked a mother. Parents often sent their children to the movies not because of the entertainment, but because it served to keep them out of the house and off the streets. An indulgent father, proprietor of a pool room, gave his seven year old boy money to go to the movies at least four times a week and sometimes oftener, saying, "He goes with older boys or with anyone who will take him in. If I don't give him the money he might steal it like other boys. Anyway, boys

are safe in the movies and they don't have much place to play in this neighborhood."

The mother of two boys said, "I send them to the movies on Saturday and Sunday to keep them off the street and always on rainy days to save their clothes and shoes. I know they are safe while there." Another mother said, "I send both boys to the movies on Saturday and Sunday because they stay about three hours and I am glad to get rid of them. I know they are safe while in the movies. They are wild at home."

The theatres uptown were frequented by two of the older boys. The immediate block had a few pool rooms but in none of them were boys admitted. There was, however, a pool room on Mott Street, kept by a Fordham University student earning his way through college, to which five of the boys went. A nineteen year old boy working his way through college said, "I wouldn't go to the ordinary pool room. I never go near them. This one we visit is a very good one kept by a young man studying dentistry at Fordham University."

Cafes on Mulberry Street frequented by four boys were reported to be "decent places."

A proprietor of one pool room and cafe combined, located in a basement on Fleet Street, said it was patronized by men returning from work early in the morning to whom he served coffee. None of the boys on the block evinced any interest in the place.

### Parental Supervision

Parental controls appeared to be strongly operative in the Fleet Street block, particularly over the older boys, in contrast to the freedom allowed by parents in other blocks. This adequacy of parental supervision was striking and significant when considered in relation to the low amount of juvenile delinquent behavior discovered on this block. More detailed reports given by parents in 1926, indicated that the great majority of boys spent their play time on the home block, or in the neighborhood. None of those reported upon as typical cases went very far from the neighborhood, and consequently their parents were in a

relatively favorable position to know of their general whereabouts and behavior.

In 1931, 55 of 59 boys reported upon were supervised with reference to their hours of homecoming. Four were not supervised, three of them being boys between the ages of 15 and 17. Supervision over activities was indicated in 65 out of 73 cases reported upon. The eight unsupervised boys were between 6 and 17 years old—four being between the ages of 15 and 17. (Table 21, Parental Supervision over Hours and Activities of Fleet Street Boys.)

There were no reports on supervision over hours for 36 boys, and none on supervision over activities for 22 boys. In none of these cases where reports on supervision were not given was there any indication from the family statements or from the description of the family life made by the investigator to show either a noteworthy lack of supervision or juvenile misbehavior. A safe deduction can therefore be drawn, that the unreported cases were not markedly different in the type of supervision from the reported cases. The indications were, that whereas parental control was moderately adequate, it was a control which dealt largely with superficial outward aspects of child behavior rather than with any other finer psychological aspects.

TABLE 21

## PARENTAL SUPERVISION OVER HOURS AND ACTIVITIES OF FLEET STREET BOYS, 1931

Totals		Ages												Not Recorded
		Under 6		6 to 9		10 to 14		15 to 17		18 Plus				
Yes	%	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
<i>Supervision over hours</i>														
55	94	4	6	12	0	9	1	16	0	7	3	11	0	36
<i>Supervision over activities</i>														
65	90	8	10	13	0	14	2	19	2	7	4	12	0	22

Repeated statements by parents indicated their inadequate grasp of the problems involved in supervision. Most of them were content to know that their children were on the block and were playing with children whom they knew. The content of



their children's play apparently meant nothing to them. A number of statements by parents on the subject of supervision, gathered in 1926, have been arranged according to the age of the children concerned, from the youngest to the oldest:

The boy (six years) is not allowed to play in the park without me. It is filled with drunken men and bums so it is no place for children. I'm afraid to let him go there; under Manhattan Bridge there are too many boys. I don't let him go there. All the mothers signed a petition to stop the traffic and it did a little good but not much. It is still unsafe for children to play on the streets. (Mother.)

I allow my seven year old boy to play freely in the neighborhood or in Columbus Park. He doesn't go far away and is in by five or six o'clock. When I work he stays with his grandparents who live downstairs. (Mother.)

They both (seven and nine year old boys) play on the street, I don't watch them. What can they do? All the boys play on the street. There is no other place. They come in when they get tired. I don't mind if the nine year old gets in by nine-thirty. (Mother.)

Too much traffic for the boys (seven and nine) to be safe on the street, but it's the only place for them to play. There are so many accidents I am afraid to let my children out, but they have to take a chance for it's the only place they can play. The park is too crowded. (Mother.)

There are many bad boys in the neighborhood, so I don't let my boys stay out late. The little boy (seven) comes in early, and the big boy (fourteen) is always either reading or playing his violin so he doesn't have much time to play around the street. There is so much traffic and so many accidents it is not safe for them to play on the street. (Mother.)

The boys (eight and thirteen years) fight in the morning before I come home from work. My girl has to leave at seven o'clock and so she can't cook coffee for them, and when I get home at eight-thirty they are fighting. They play on the street until they get tired. They are all right; all the kids around here play on the street. They don't get into trouble. They are good boys only they fight while I am at work. (Mother.)

Boys have to play on the street; there is no other place. They

come in by eight or nine o'clock. (Mother of ten, twelve and seventeen year old boys.)

"The boys come home by eight thirty. I know where they always go. They always tell me, so I know they are safe. I don't let them hang around on the street," said a mother of two boys. The thirteen year old boy himself said, "I work every day from three to six, then I go to catechism from six to seven, then the Boys' Brigade from seven to eight thirty. I like to stay out to play till nine, but if I do my father whips me. He just wants me to work and have no play."

I let him (fourteen years old) play out some on the street at night, but not late. If he wants to go to any place worth while and tells me about it I let him go. He has always told me where he was going. (Mother.)

"My boys are always in the house early, even my big boy. I always know where they go and tell them when to come home. The younger boys must be in by eight o'clock, and they only play in the park right across the street or in the street in front of the house in the evening," said a mother of four boys. Her eighteen year old boy said, "The neighborhood used to have a bad name but not now, not any more than you would find in any neighborhood. I never go into cafes or pool rooms. I don't associate with those who go there. My brother does as I say. My mother and father expect me to guide him."

The records for 1931 were mute with reference to types of discipline used upon the children, in contrast to the rich record of discipline reported in Tyler Street. An examination of cases reported upon in 1926 indicated a similar lack of report upon the types of discipline. Apparently the discipline of Fleet Street children was well in hand and whatever the customary forms were, the parents did not think the problem of discipline of sufficient importance to dwell upon in their interviews with the case workers.

### Behavior Disorders and Juvenile Delinquency

Both the original 1926 survey and the 1931 re-survey agreed that juvenile delinquency was minimal in the Fleet Street block. This finding correlated with the lack of adult delinquency in the

same block. Fleet Street families were singularly free from gossip concerning boys in their families who may have been in trouble. This was not a matter of secrecy, but an absence of misconduct, as indicated by the official records of the Children's Court and of the Bureau of Attendance of the New York City Department of Education. In 1926 and 1927 three boys reported past records of truancy, and an examination of official records by the re-surveyors disclosed only four truancy hearings in 1926 and 1927. One hearing resulted in a truancy school commitment. Five boys were arraigned in the Children's Court during 1926 and 1927.

Statements of boys indicated an absence of gang organization. The only college boy on the block stated that the other boys were good enough fellows, but were interested only in sports. Several children stated that they had amicable relationships with the police, who never chased them while they were at play. A boy of fifteen felt that the block was singularly free from tough boys. In only four instances in 1931 did parents report boyhood conduct that might be regarded as bordering on juvenile delinquency. Thus a boy of sixteen, a truant from continuation school, was haled into the Municipal Court for failure to obtain working papers. This boy's difficulties centered around the fear of a tonsil operation, which was a required preliminary to the granting of a Health Department certificate of approval for working papers.

One lively boy of 15, unresponsive to family economic stress, was blamed by his mother during the depression for failing to secure work. As a result of the mother's nagging, the boy had been driven from home, and came back only at night to sleep. A sixteen year old boy was beyond his mother's control, and kept late hours. A seven year old sub-normal boy was a behavior problem.

The family backgrounds of juvenile delinquency were pointedly described in the case of two brothers, ages twelve and thirteen who, in 1926, had been committed for truancy. The unemployed father, a tailor by trade, worked in a pool room, while the mother worked as an office cleaner. The family occu-

pied a rear tenement flat that was dilapidated, dirty and unhealthy, and the children were without supervision.

### Adolescent Offenses

The absence of data for 1930 and 1931 prevented a comparison of adolescent offenders for the two survey periods. A tabulation of court arraignments of block residents in 1926 and 1927 disclosed that of 205 arrests, eighteen, or approximately 8%, were among boys between the ages of sixteen and twenty years.<sup>6</sup>

An examination of the court dockets disclosed that among this age group the arraignments were primarily among Italian boys (14 of 18 cases). One Italian youth was arraigned on an attempted robbery charge. The other offenses were minor in nature—two petty thefts, five cases of disorderly conduct, one case involving possession of narcotics, and nine cases of gambling. The chief importance of the court arraignments among this group was in the manner of their disposition. Cases were usually thrown out of court, irrespective of race or severity of offense. Of eighteen arrests in 1926 and 1927, thirteen defendants were dismissed or discharged, one was held for a higher court, and only four were punished. Among the latter group, one was given a small fine, two were given suspended sentences, and only one was committed to the workhouse for two days. None of the boys could be identified in the 1931 case records, and had either moved from the block in the intervening period or had given false names upon arrest.

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<sup>6</sup> This proportion is not excessive, being the average proportion of offenses committed by this age group, in 1929, 1930 and 1931 in New York City. Cf. *The Youthful Offender*, a statistical study of crime among the sixteen to twenty year old group in New York City by Harry M. Shulman, New York State Crime Commission, 1931.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### PARNELL STREET

ON THE LOWER West Side of Manhattan borough, sandwiched in between docks and wharves on one side and towering office buildings of the financial district on the other, lies an old and neglected area of blighted housing dating in construction from pre-revolutionary times, consisting almost entirely of three and four story Old Law houses of pre-tenement type. These ramshackle buildings probably owe their continued existence to their function as a source of light and air for surrounding skyscrapers. They are, in effect, "tax payers," owned by surrounding corporations for the sole purpose of safe-guarding the realty values of adjacent skyscrapers through provision of space for light and air which would be impossible if the space they occupy had been sold for commercial office building construction.

Parnell Street lies at the southern tip of this area, a stone's throw from the Battery and close by the starting-point for the immigrant hordes that poured forth from Castle Garden in the '90's. On the corner of the block still stands a boarding house which at that time received newly-arrived immigrants.

The block has been the residence of successive waves of immigration; first Irish, then Syrian and Greek, and finally Hungarian and Czechoslovakian. The Irish, Syrians and Greeks represented newly-arrived immigration, but a considerable proportion of the Czechoslovakians came to Parnell Street via the Pennsylvania coal fields, which were their first area of settlement.

#### Composition of Population

The total number of families having boys between the ages of two and twenty-one years increased from 57 to 65 during the

survey period. The total number of boys increased from 106 in 1926 to 117 in 1932, and the total number of individuals concerned in the study, including boarders and lodgers, increased from 307 in 1926 to 342 in 1932.<sup>1</sup> Although the population in the two survey years were roughly similar, the constituency of the boy population changed somewhat, the proportion of older boys having increased considerably in 1932 because most of the boys in the 1932 study had lived on the block since the earlier study. The totals for the boys at the different age groups were almost identical for children below school age, but dissimilar for boys of fifteen and over, of whom there were but 19 in 1926 and 35 in 1932.<sup>2</sup> Nearly all of the boys in both survey years lived at home, only four being away in 1926 and two in 1932.<sup>3</sup>

In 1926, 92 of 106 boys, and in 1932, 98 of 117 boys, were American born. The remainder were primarily from Greece, Austria and Hungary in 1926, and from Czechoslovakia in 1932. The child population on this block was, therefore, typically first generation American.

The adult population of the block was primarily Czechoslovakian, with a very small admixture of Russians, Poles, Greeks, and Syrians. Aside from a handful of Irish-Americans, a remnant of preceding immigrations, and a few others of American

<sup>1</sup>The composition of families, in 1926 and 1932 (1926 figures given first) included; parents, 108-120; lodgers, 23-12; others 4-14. The "other" group included relatives. It will be noted that doubling up with relatives was more frequent during the depression year, but as relatives increased, lodgers correspondingly decreased. Another change was the foothold gained by prostitution in 1932, five of the lodgers having been reported as prostitutes.

<sup>2</sup>Age groupings in 1926 and 1932 (1926 figures given first) were; under 4 years, 10-10; 4-5 years, 11-12; 6-9 years, 35-27; 10-14 years, 31-33; 15-17 years, 10-19; 18 years and over, 9-16; totals, 106-117. Classified by broader age groupings, the figures were; under age 2, 5-3; ages 2-15, 91-91; ages 16-20 years, 15-26.

<sup>3</sup>The absences from home in 1926 consisted entirely of detentions or commitments for delinquency: thus a 14 year old boy was in a Roman Catholic private school as a preventive measure against delinquency; a 17 year old boy was in the Manhattan City Prison awaiting trial for larceny; a 9 year old boy was detained at the Children's Society on the charge of truancy, due to his implication with the older boy held on a larceny charge; and a 16 year old boy had run away from home for the seventh time, and his whereabouts were unknown. In 1932, of the two boys away from home, one was in the truancy school and the other was on a farm.

born stock, the block was thus primarily Slavic in nationality and traditions. In 1926, of 114 fathers and mothers, only 10 were born in the United States, and in 1932, of 123 parents, only 14 were American born. In religion they were almost equally divided into Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox. The proportion of the latter increased from 1926 to 1932. (Table 22, Birthplace of Parents of Parnell Street Boys.)

TABLE 22

BIRTH-PLACE OF PARENTS OF PARNELL STREET BOYS, 1926-1932

<i>Birth-place</i>	<i>Father</i>		<i>Mother</i>	
	1926	1932	1926	1932
United States	0	6	0	2
United States (Irish descent)	4	2	6	4
Austria (Carpatho-Russian descent)	13	0	14	0
Austria (Polish descent)	0	0	0	1
Austria (Slovak descent)	3	0	6	0
Austria (Ukrainian descent)	2	3	2	2
Czecho-Slovakia	0	31	0	36
Germany	0	1	0	0
Greece	6	4	5	5
Hungary (Carpatho-Russian descent)	4	0	4	0
Hungary (Slovak descent)	8	0	7	0
Hungary (Magyar descent)	1	1	1	1
Ireland	0	1	0	3
Poland	6	3	8	6
Russia (Polish descent)	4	1	1	1
Russia	0	3	0	2
Syria	3	5	3	5
Not reported	3	0	0	0

Population Changes Between Survey Years

During the five and one-half year period between the 1926 survey and the 1932 re-survey, no significant population changes took place on the block. The population, instead of diminishing, as might have been expected from the trend in other slum areas, increased slightly. The turnover in population was 38%, but this replacement of families affected only slightly the nationality status of the block. Thus, in 1932, as in 1926, there were ten Irish and Irish-Americans, while Czechoslovaks and other Slavic groups, including Russians, Ukrainians and Poles, numbered 91

in 1932, in comparison with 89 in 1926. There were 9 Greeks in 1932, compared to 11 in 1926, and 10 Syrians in 1932, instead of 6 in 1926. The only increase of any importance was in the American born group, which numbered 8, exclusive of the Irish and Irish-Americans.

An examination of the economic status, the type of occupations, and the nationality status of the block at the two survey years indicates that the block had experienced cultural and economic continuity. Whatever changes occurred during the six year period must be ascribed either to the effect of the industrial depression, to the process of assimilation, or to some extent, to changes in the age composition of the child population.

### Housing

In discussing the manner of dwelling of the average Parnell Street family, we must take into account the type of structure in which they dwelt. As had been already stated, the age of the Parnell Street houses ran back more than a century, some to Colonial times. During the Civil War many were used as barracks for the quartering of Union troops. The rooms were very small, and consisted usually of units of two, an inner sleeping room and an outer living room. Large families often occupied two of these miniature flats, thus having a front parlor, two inner rooms without direct ventilation, and a kitchen facing the backyard. Despite the effect of the depression, the tendency between the two survey years was definitely in the direction of larger living quarters for the average family. Thus in 1926, 35 families, or 61%, while in 1932, 30 or 41% lived in two rooms. Families occupying four rooms rose from 15, or 26%, to 25, or 37%. (Table 23, Housing Congestion, Parnell Street.)

In 1926, 307 persons occupied 165 rooms, with a housing congestion of 1.84 persons per room, while in 1932, 354 persons occupied 202 rooms, a reduction to 1.75 persons per room. This improvement would not be noteworthy in normal times, but in view of the fact that it was accomplished in the face of an unprecedented economic depression, it was an indication that some important change in attitude toward congestion in living



TABLE 23  
HOUSING CONGESTION, PARNELL STREET

Total No. Families	Number in Family*		2		3		4		5		6		12	
	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932
1	2	2	..	..	1	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
6	4	3	5	2	..	1	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
17	21	4	14	15	2	1	1	5	..	..	..	..	..	..
14	16	5	9	7	..	3	5	6	..	..	..	..	..	..
7	11	6	4	5	..	2	3	4	..	..	..	..	..	..
3	5	7	2	..	..	2	1	3	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	2	8	..	1	1	..	2	1	1	1	..	1	..	..
2	3	9	1	..	..	1	1	1	..	..	..	1	..	..
1	3	12	..	..	..	..	1	2	..	..	..	1	..	..
1	0	16	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Totals 57	67	..	35	30	4	10	15	25	1	0	1	2	1	0

\* Includes lodgers.

quarters was taking place among these families. Rental reductions alone could not have been the major cause, for the average rental during this period dropped only \$1.40 per room per month, from \$7.20 to \$5.80, and was accompanied by an equal, if not greater, reduction in wages. There is a strong possibility that the change may have been due to improved health habits and health interests.

It should not, however, be thought that conditions improved in a gratifying way, for they did not; there was still unbelievable crowding among many families. Thus among seven families, consisting of five people each, but two rooms were occupied per family. Five families having six persons each occupied two rooms per family. In one flagrant case, eight persons lived in two small rooms.

In hardly a single family could the housing conditions be described as adequate. As the average family consisted of six members, it is very evident that there was overcrowding, no privacy, no space for recreation or study, and no possibility of decent hours for retiring. These cramped conditions affected most drastically the manner of life of Parnell Street boys. Few remained in the house any longer than necessary, snatching a "hunk of bread" and departing for the street. On rainy and cold days a boy's time was usually divided between the movies and the small candy stores on the street. None of the boys complained about the living arrangements, accepting the conditions as natural, but a few parents did express the desire to move where they could have more room, "now that the boys are bigger." As some of the older boys became self-supporting, a few families took larger apartments of from four to six rooms.

The typical Parnell Street home was early nineteenth century in its sanitary facilities, none of the homes having baths or hot water in 1926. In 1932 six families had baths and four had hot water. Private hall toilets increased from none to 21 during the survey years, apparently due to the taking over by many families of both rear and front rooms, including the toilet between. The number of hall toilets used by two or more families increased from 22 to 29, and the number of yard toilets also increased, from 3 to 6. Part of this increase was due to the increased con-

gestion of the block. The hall toilet was often a source of friction, for neighbors accused one another of carelessness in leaving them unlocked, or of negligence in keeping them sanitary. In houses where toilets were on the first floor or in the backyard, obscene writings were frequently observed.

In spite of the primitive sanitary facilities, the residents, with a few exceptions, gave the impression of great personal cleanliness. During Saturday visits, mothers in many apartments were found bathing the younger boys in a kitchen wash tub. In 1926 all of the older boys used the showers at the Bowling Green Neighborhood House or went with the adult members of the family to the public baths.

In addition to lack of sanitary facilities, the families lived under other most backward circumstances. Among 59 families on whom a report was made in 1932<sup>4</sup>, only 25 had electricity, and 33 used gas light only. One family used an oil lamp.

The typical method of heating was by the old-fashioned kitchen stove, usually fed by wood, and which, as rural readers will recall, had, and still has, many defects. In these small homes, having tightly closed windows, the stove threw off an intemperate quantity of heat and created an unbearable temperature. Furthermore, it ate an inordinate quantity of fuel and, consequently, Parnell Street boys spent a large part of their after-school time scurrying through the waterfront warehouse district in search of packing cases and other wood for kindling, which they carted home in small express wagons.

In 1931 the Police Department gave out a quantity of free coal, and this, too, was brought home by the children.

The average Parnell Street home was poorly furnished but clean, giving evidence of adequate care by housewives. Thus of 57 homes, 41 were poorly furnished but clean, 2 were both clean and comfortably furnished, 14 were both poorly furnished and dirty, and 1 was clean but untidy.

In many homes windows were kept tightly closed and wood stoves were kept going in mid-summer. In general, little appreciation was evidenced of the need for fresh air. In connection with this point, it must be repeated, that in every home there

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<sup>4</sup> These data not available for 1926.

was at least one dark room without direct ventilation, used as a bedroom. A number of mothers complained that the landlords refused to make repairs or improvements, and several stated that they had been forced to make these themselves. One family installed electricity and painted and papered the rooms. Another family had to repair plaster when it fell.

Hardly any of the homes possessed aesthetic attractions. Those that were clean were very sparsely furnished, without evidence of taste. The usual decorations consisted of religious pictures.

In several of the homes there was the odor of fermenting liquor, a condition generally known among the residents, as there was no place to hide a still and there was apparently no privacy, since neighbors ran in and out at all times.

### Rentals

Most families paid from \$15.00 to \$19.00 rent per month, the median gross rental for both years being about \$17.00 a month. The only noticeable change in 1931 was a downward shift in the number of families paying between \$20.00 and \$35.00 per month. Where, in this group, the \$20.00 to \$24.00 class was larger in 1931, the \$25.00 to \$29.00 was more numerous in 1926. Rentals of \$50.00 and over, which included stores as well as dwelling rooms, were found in 3 cases in 1926 and in 1, in 1932. Two families

TABLE 24  
RENTALS, PARNELL STREET

Total Number of Families		Average Monthly Rental									
		\$5-9		\$10-14		\$15-19		\$20-24		\$25-29	
1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932
57	66**	1	2	9	7	31	33	1	10	10	6
		\$30-35		\$50		\$65-69		\$75-79			
		1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932		
		2	5	1	0	1	1*	1	0		

\* Includes store rental.

\*\* Includes two families receiving free rental for janitorial service.

went rent-free in 1932 in exchange for janitor service. There were no free rentals in 1926. (Table 24, Rentals, Parnell Street.)

For the bulk of the block population, rent in 1932 took a far larger slice of the family income than it did in 1926. This was due, in part, to the increase in the number occupying larger apartments.

These buildings were said to be in the hands of real estate operators who had controlling interests in surrounding office skyscrapers. Several houses were supposedly owned by trans-Atlantic shipping corporations with offices in the immediate vicinity. None of the tenants, however, ever had contact with the owners, since agents collected the rentals and acted as buffers in the handling of complaints. Absentee ownership here, as elsewhere, resulted in the loss of a sense of moral responsibility on the part of any individual for conditions existing in these blocks.

### Broken and Disorganized Homes

In 1926, 9%, and in 1932, 18% of the homes were broken by the death or absence of one or both parents. (Table 25, Civil Status of Parnell Street Parents.) In 1926, among the six instances of broken homes, three were due to the death of the father, one to the absence of the father in search of employment, one to the separation of the parents, and one was due to the

TABLE 25

CIVIL STATUS OF PARNELL STREET PARENTS, 1926-1932

<i>Parental Condition</i>	1926	1932
Father and mother both living—at home .....	50 *	53
Father and mother both living—father away .....	1	..
Father and mother both living—separated .....	1	3
Father and mother both living—father deserted .....	1	3
Mother only living .....	3	6
Mother and stepfather .....	1	2
	57	67

\* Includes 1 family (mother, father and 2 boys) in which the father is own father to 1 boy and stepfather to 1, and mother is own mother to 1 and step-mother to 1.

desertion of the father. In one case there was a step-father. In 1932, of the 12 cases of broken homes, six were caused by the death of the father, three by his desertion, and three by the separation of parents. There were two step-fathers.

Although physically broken homes were not numerous, disorganized homes were frequent. Family disorganization was indicated in an astounding proportion of cases. Among 67 families there were 23, or 34%, in which crime, delinquency, or severe discord was reported either by the parents themselves or by neighbors. In 10 cases discord alone was present; in 8 cases, crime alone; and in 5 cases both crime and discord. Chronic alcoholism accompanied and intensified this social disorganization, there having been 13 instances of drunkenness among the members of the 23 discordant or criminal family groups.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, among the remaining forty-four integrated families there was only one case of drunkenness.

The factors responsible for domestic discord were multiple, but in each case one factor seemed outstanding, as alcoholism (3 cases), sexual disloyalty (2 cases), and mental disease (2 cases).

Mental disease, undiagnosed but indicated, is illustrated by the following case:—

*Case 16—*

Domestic difficulty in this family ceased with the death of the father. The family of 11 had been supported by a Family Welfare Society since 1927, in that year receiving an income of \$100.00 per month from charity. The father, who was afflicted with an active case of tuberculosis, treated his wife and children brutally, locking them out of the house, and at times forced them to sleep in the hall. In 1928 the woman sought to have her husband arrested for cruelty, but this the court refused because of his illness, although the Bowling Green Nursing Association reported that definite infection was being transmitted to the family. The father refused clinic treatment, drank heavily, and died in 1930.

Sexual disloyalty, in another case, created similar behavior patterns. In this case the mother, of Polish birth, and resident forty

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<sup>5</sup> Seven fathers, four sons, and two mothers.

years on the block, was reputed to have been a hard drinker in her youth, and in 1931 was a mean, quarrelsome woman. Her husband, a heavy drinker, failed to support her, and she finally turned him out. It was said that he had a woman in Brooklyn and alternated his time between her and his family, until his ejection.

In one case, unemployment due to the depression was frankly recognized as a basis of friction. Here a mother stated that she and her husband had gotten along nicely until the depression, but thereafter they quarreled daily because he could not find work.

In another case, a man deserted his home because, as he complained, his wife thought he was lazy because he was out of work. While unemployed, however, he had been a heavy drinker.

### Family Accord and Discord

The reader must not over-emphasize the importance of family disorganization and discord in this block for, large as those cases bulk, nevertheless the majority of the families appeared to get along relatively well. It is, of course, impossible for a survey of this sort to achieve a true inside picture of the psychological relationship between husband and wife. Such a picture can be obtained only in the privacy of the office of the psychiatrist, the social worker, or the minister. The external evidence was that the majority of the parents appeared to have normally adequate social relations. An examination of the case records in this group indicated that among ten families an especially pleasant atmosphere was noted. Thus the investigator used such phrases as: "States husband is very good to her," "Family spoke courteously to one another," and "Family atmosphere seemed happy." In twenty-seven cases there was no evidence of friction, but, on the other hand, no evidence of pleasant relationships. In two cases rough and insensitive treatment of each other by husband and wife were observed.

Five cases give typical examples of the range of parental relationships:

*Case 17—*

Very friendly relationship openly expressed. The parents were Czecho-Slovakian; the father was 34 and the mother was 31. The father entered the United States in 1923 and the mother in 1928. They were Greek Catholics, the father speaking only Czecho-Slovakian and the mother only Russian; both read Russian. The father was employed as a second cook regularly in a restaurant, earning on an average, \$20.00 per week, and the mother worked from 4:00 A.M. to 7:30 A.M. as a charwoman in a nearby office building, earning \$10.00 a week. Their only organization interest consisted of occasional attendance at the Greek Catholic Church. They had two boys, ages 11 and 2 years. They occupied two rooms of a four-room apartment, which they shared with the family of a sister-in-law.

The mother when visited was very neat, and the simple furniture was rather tastefully arranged. The father, a rather bright looking man, was at home. He proudly showed embroidered shades and hangings that his wife had made, and said that she was a very good housekeeper. Several pictures of Lenin were on the wall. When asked if he were in favor of Soviet Russia, he replied, "People like it." He stated that on summer evenings he and his wife took the children to Battery Park, where he played ball with them, and the mother embroidered.

*Case 18—*

*Apparent family unity.* This family consisted of a young father of 31 and a young mother of 25, a girl of 2 and a boy of 5 years. Both parents were born in Czecho-Slovakia and entered the United States in 1929. They were Greek Orthodox in religion, but did not attend a church. They spoke only Czecho-Slovakian at home, and also read that language only. The father was regularly employed as a porter in a nearby office building, earning \$22.50 per week, and his wife worked from 2:00 A.M. to 8:30 A.M. as a charwoman in a nearby office building, earning \$11.00 a week. Neither had any organization interests. They occupied four rooms and had one male lodger, whose room rent paid their own monthly rental. The home, when it was seen, was not clean, the curtains were dirty and the windows had not



been washed for weeks; the kitchen sink was full of unwashed dishes, and clothing was strewn around in the kitchen and living room. The boy of five was still dressed in his sleeping suit, although the home was visited at mid-day. There was an iron cot in the living room. The mother, round faced and blond, more Germanic than Czech in type, was very pleasant to the investigator, but spoke almost no English. The husband, who came home for lunch, spoke more freely. He was rather an emotional person, who, in speaking about his own father in Czecho-Slovakia, began to cry.

The mother, a very temperamental person, shook and scolded the boy while dressing him for kindergarten. The child, in response, kicked her, and also cried. While leaving, the boy was clinging around his father's neck asking for a nickel, which the father laughingly gave him, saying, "Maybe you want a dollar"? The two-year-old daughter sat eating sour cream with her hands. Both children appeared pale and undernourished, and the child of two definitely had rickets. The father stated that they liked it in America because they could earn money and could send some over to "the other side."

*Case 19—*

*Discord due to alcoholism.* Father, age 33, was born in Russia, and mother, age 36, was born in Czecho-Slovakia. The father entered the United States in 1917 and the mother in 1910. The father was Greek Catholic, but the mother was a Protestant. His language was Russian, but both spoke English in addition. The father was literate in both English and Russian, but the mother was not. The father had been unemployed for two years, and earned a pittance selling ice cream on the streets. The wife worked from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M. and from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. as a charwoman in a local office building, earning \$12.00 per week. Neither parent had any organization interests. They had four children, three girls, ages 9, 6 and 4, and one boy aged 7. The family of six occupied two rooms, for which they paid \$15.00 per month. The home when visited was fairly clean, but poorly furnished. All the children were undersized and pale. It was lunch time, and the mother was giving a six-

year-old child a cup of coffee, and nothing else. The girl of nine was lying on the bed in the kitchen complaining of a stomach ache, which the mother seemed to take very lightly.

The mother stated that her husband two years ago had been a confirmed drunkard, with a nasty temper when drunk. Once when she criticized him during a drunken spell, he became enraged and struck her. In the melee she struck him on the head with an empty milk bottle, and he threw her downstairs. She had him arrested, and he was sent to the penitentiary. During his entire period of imprisonment he continued writing to her pleading that she secure his release, stating that she knew that when he was sober he never struck her, etc. After six months he was placed on parole. His wife then took him to church, where he swore off drinking for one year. Since that time he had been sober for two years. He told her over and over again how happy he was that he was through with liquor; that he could eat and enjoy his food. The wife stated that the neighborhood was full of homes where liquor was made and sold, and that in the past she had to go more than once to these houses to drag her husband home.

*Case 20—*

*Broken home due to sexual irregularities of immigrant husband.* The mother, age 34, born in Czecho-Slovakia, entered the United States in 1930. Her husband, age 36, was born in the United States, but was reared in Czecho-Slovakia. The mother spoke only Czecho-Slovakian, and read only in that language. She was employed from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M. and from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. as a char woman in a nearby office building, earning \$12.00 per week.

The family consisted of the mother and two children, a girl of nine and a boy of twelve. They occupied two rooms, paying \$10.00 per month. The home when visited appeared very clean, and the mother was pleasant, although unable to speak English. Her children acted as interpreters. Through them it was learned that this woman and her children came from Czecho-Slovakia two and one-half years prior. The husband, who had been born in the United States but had been reared since a small boy in

Czecho-Slovakia, was, in 1930, in the United States, and had sent for them. When she arrived, she found her husband living with another woman, and although he had signed all the necessary papers to get her over here, he had not a cent, and had purchased furniture on the instalment plan, paying \$2.00 down and \$2.00 a week, for which his brother had to pay until the narrator got a job. He deserted her shortly thereafter. He had since been arrested several times and brought into the Family Court through the help of a Family Welfare Society, but each time he had avoided payment of the amount stipulated by court order. Both the mother and the children bore marks of their poverty and distress. The children looked pale and undernourished and the mother looked ten years older than her age. She showed the investigator her own passport photo in which both she and the children then looked exceedingly well. She stated that the husband's brother and mother were very good to her, appreciated her difficulties, and helped to clothe the children.

*Case 21—*

*Marital discord due to mental disease.* The father, age 45, and the mother, age 43, were both born in Czecho-Slovakia, the father having entered the United States in 1911 and the mother in 1913. Both were Greek Orthodox and spoke and read only Czecho-Slovakian. The father was a longshoreman, but had not worked in the past four years. The mother was a charwoman, working in a nearby office building from 3:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M. earning \$10.00 per week. Besides the parents, there were three boys, ages 23, 17 and 9. They occupied two rooms, for which they paid \$18.00 per month. The parents and one boy slept in the bedroom, and the two older boys slept on a folding cot in the kitchen. The family lived in the Pennsylvania mining section for several years. The three children were born in the United States, but the mother has been back to Austria several times, her last return being in 1920. The father has never sought citizenship, having stated to the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association nurses that he had a small property abroad to which he hoped later to return.

The home when visited was spotlessly clean and cheerful. It was apparent that the wife was an excellent housekeeper. She was making some cookies, which she insisted that the visitor taste—they were excellent.

As the visitor entered the home the mother was crying, and said her husband was leaving her for another woman. The husband denied this, and said she was only imagining it. He was very angry at the accusation, and almost struck her. The woman stated that her husband had been in the workhouse several times for attacking neighborhood girls and women. She stated that she had worked hard all her life, and that her husband spent his money on other women. (This accusation was substantiated by reports from the Bowling Green Neighborhood House in 1931. In January of that year the husband had beaten his wife so badly that stitches were taken in her scalp. She had him arrested, but the magistrate discharged the man and requested Bowling Green Neighborhood House to aid in family adjustment. She stated that he had spent three months in the workhouse for an assault on a strange woman. She had to quit her job to watch him, as he made advances to girls and women in the halls and on the street. No action had ever been taken, as no one would go as a witness against him.)

### Health of Parents

The actual physical status of the parents on Parnell Street could not be determined for lack of medical data. The only reports available were those given by the families themselves, and they were necessarily inadequate, and probably represented an understatement of the degree of chronic illness among parents in this block. These reports cited 17 of 67 families in which either the father or the mother suffered from chronic disease.

Among the wives, illness appeared to be related to the exceedingly hard work in which they engaged in addition to their house work. Among the physical conditions reported by mothers were:—Cardiac disturbance (2 cases), rheumatism (2 cases), varicose veins (1 case), goiter (1 case), high blood pressure (1

case), blood poisoning (1 case), and general debility due to overwork (5 cases).

### Occupations of Fathers

The great majority of Parnell Street fathers worked at tasks requiring very little skill. In 1926, 80%, and in 1932, 66% of the male parents were unskilled laborers. The proportion of semi-skilled mechanics, merchants, and those engaged in various petty businesses remained approximately the same in both survey years, but there was an increase in the number of skilled mechanics, in 3 cases represented by new residents drawn from the mechanic class, and in 5 cases represented by a transition from an unskilled to a skilled trade. Not a single parent was, in either survey year, a clerical, commercial, or professional worker.

Building porters increased from 16 of 52 parents in 1926 to 26 of 59 (or 40%) in 1932. Able-bodied, husky-appearing men on this block were thankful to have these jobs. Although the pay was small and there was no chance for advancement, many deliberately moved into the neighborhood to obtain this type of work in the surrounding office buildings for themselves and for their wives as well. They had little choice in the matter, for most of them had very little education, and had been farm laborers "in the old country."

In 1926 several mothers stated that from the fathers' earnings they were unable to lay by any money for emergencies, while a few said they worked in order to save money to buy a home, or in anticipation of a return to their native land. A number of Czecho-Slovakians, planning to return, welcomed the less strict education and employment laws in Czecho-Slovakia which would enable their young boys to work with them.

### Employment of Mothers

The majority of the mothers worked outside of the home, either as office cleaners, janitresses, or both, at hours that either

robbed them of sleep, or that interfered with their home duties.<sup>6</sup> They worked early in the morning, as early as 2:00 A.M. and in the late afternoon and early evening, when their children were home from school and required their presence.<sup>7</sup>

The daily round of the average mother involved an extraordinary outlay of strength and endurance. Before rousing her children, giving them breakfast, and sending them off to school, the average mother had already put in several hours of hard work. During the morning she prepared lunch; in the early afternoon she marketed, cooked, laundered, etc. In 1926, half of the mothers did office cleaning again in the late afternoon and early evening, when they were finally free for relaxation and sleep, in preparation for the next day's round.

Besides being ruinous to the health of the mothers, this program forced many children to go to school with ill-prepared meals, or with no meals at all. Young children were left un-

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<sup>6</sup>In 1926, among 57 mothers, only 13 were not commercially employed. Forty-three were employed outside the home, thirty-four as char-women, two as char-woman and dish-washer (2 jobs), and one as a dish-washer. Six divided their work between office cleaning and janitor service in their home building. One worked only as a janitress. In 1932, the figures were similar; only 14 of sixty-five were not employed, and the division of employed mothers was in the same occupations, save for two who helped in their husband's stores without salary. Janitresses increased from seven to ten.

In both years mothers made substantial contributions to the family income. The range of incomes for both years (figures for 1926 given first in each class interval) was: under \$10.00, 1-6; \$10.00-\$15.00, 34-41; \$16.00-\$20.00, 5-1; \$20.00 and over, 4-0; not stated, 0-1. The depression all but eliminated incomes over \$15.00, and increased incomes under \$10.00, but in both years the majority of mothers remained in the \$10.00-\$15.00 group.

<sup>7</sup>During 1926, 36 out of 44, and in 1932, 36 out of 40 mothers worked mornings away from home. The beginning hour ranged from 2:00 to 7:00 A.M.; during 1926, 24 of 36 mothers began working away from home between 2:00 and 5:00 A.M.; and in 1932, 26 of 36 did likewise. The number of hours of employment outside of the home ranged from 1½ to 10, the majority putting in between four and five hours. Thus, in 1926, 9 of 36 mothers, and in 1932, 6 of 36 mothers did less than four hours of outside work; 25 and 30 put in between four and five hours in the two years, respectively; while in 1926, ten mothers, and in 1932, only two mothers worked outside between five and ten hours daily.

The depression year reduced the income, but also the hours of outside employment of mothers. Whereas, in 1926, twenty-three mothers worked a double shift, in the early morning and again in the late afternoon, in 1932, only 9 were so occupied, the remainder working either in the morning alone or at night alone.

supervised for almost the entire day, although casual arrangements were often made with a neighbor or older child to care for them.

The father usually prepared his own coffee, leaving the boys to prepare theirs in time for school. In one family in 1926, a six-year-old boy, whose father had deserted prior to his birth, was left to take care of two younger cousins from 3:30 A.M. on. In the winter, these infants were left to prepare their own breakfast and tend the fire.

The evening meal, because of the constant coming and going of the parents, was a very casual affair, usually prepared by the mother for the father just before she left for work. The children waited and ate "the leavings." The older boys usually had no regular evening meal, but grabbed a bite when they could.

In some homes the mother cooked no meals for the children but arranged with the local grocer to have the children take whatever they wished up to a stipulated sum, either 5¢ or 10¢ per child. The result of this haphazard system was that children very often ate unsuitable and ill-balanced foods.

### Effects of the Economic Depression

The effect of the depression upon regularity of employment and income was very marked. Regular employment dropped from 83% in 1926 to 59% in 1932, and actual unemployment rose from 2% (1 case) in 1926 to 17% (10 cases) in 1932. The proportion of men irregularly employed remained about the same in both survey years. In 1932, 90% of the unemployment fell upon the unskilled labor group, which included only 69% of the working parents. Thus, of ten unemployed, one was a skilled mechanic and nine were laborers.

Incomes of fathers dropped markedly during the depression year. In 1926, the lowest salary was \$20.00 per week, and salaries ranged upward of \$35.00 per week, the median income being \$27.50. In 1932, however, ten parents earned belowed the 1926 minimum and the range, instead of being from \$20.00 to \$35.00 and over, was from \$5.00 to \$35.00 and over, the median being \$23.50, \$4.00 less than in 1926.

This median loss in salary of approximately \$18.00 per month for each productive parent in 1932 may be compared with the fact that the median rental between the two survey years did not change, remaining at about \$17.00 per month in both years. If these parents were getting along at a subsistence level in 1926, one might say that their loss of income in 1932 was just sufficient to wipe out their ability to pay rent. Since they remained on the block, rent took out of their income money which otherwise would have gone for food, clothing, and other necessities.

Although the majority of Parnell Street families were adversely affected by the economic depression, nevertheless, in comparison with families in the other blocks studied, they managed to remain above the subsistence level. Two families were comfortable in status, with an income adequate for savings; 35 had an income adequate for continuance at a low economic level; 12 had an inadequate income and were drawing upon savings; 7 were in danger of destitution and 7 were already destitute; in 3 cases the status was not known.<sup>8</sup>

An analysis of the incomes of fathers and mothers in this group disclosed the reason why so large a proportion of these families resisted the depression as well as they did. The incomes of mothers in these families kept the total income above the subsistence level. Thus, among the families with an adequate income, 31 of 33 fathers and 28 of 33 mothers worked. The total weekly income earned by fathers was \$709.00 as against \$312.00 earned by mothers. The mothers thus earned 30% of the total income of father and mother.<sup>9</sup>

Among families with inadequate incomes, 6 fathers and 5 mothers were employed. The fathers earned \$100.00 and the mothers \$56.00. Four of the 5 working mothers brought in the only income, the fathers being unemployed, and in these cases, the families would have been destitute, or near destitute, had it not been for them.

Among the families near destitution, but not altogether destitute, 1 father and 5 mothers were employed, the mothers bringing

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<sup>8</sup> These classifications are based upon admittedly crude measures, in which immediate incomes rather than average incomes were the data employed.

<sup>9</sup> These incomes were exclusive of those earned by the children.



in practically the sole family income. Thus some mothers prevented actual destitution, while others helped maintain a subsistence level of income.

This situation was no mere chance occurrence, but represented a definite planfulness on the part of the parents in choosing this block as a residence. The proximity to the office buildings in the financial section provided these people with a poorly paying but nevertheless fairly dependable source of employment. It may, therefore, be said that the industrial depression did not strike this block with full force, because the majority were employed, not in industrial pursuits, but at labor in connection with commercial enterprises.

The relative absence of physical want on this block was reflected in the lack of mental tension and the freedom from worry over economic conditions. In only 9 families did parents express concern or bitterness over their economic lot.

### The Adjustment to Slum Life

Despite the physical discomfort, congestion and squalor in which most of these families lived, the great majority of them were surprisingly complacent, and even favorable, in their attitude toward their manner of living and the block in which they lived. Among 64 families interviewed in 1932, only 11 ventured a positive expression of criticism; 32 families definitely favored the block; 12 were non-committal; and 9 made no statement. Twenty-five of these families had lived here less than six years, 35 had lived six years and over, and 4 an undetermined period.

The proportion of favorable attitudes was higher among the older residents, twenty of 35 long-time residents being favorable (57%) in comparison with eleven of 25 short-time residents (44%). The recently immigrated—ten families had arrived in the United States since 1928—seemed almost wholly without objective standards of comparison. Only one was unfavorable, three were definitely favorable, four were neutral, and two had no statement to make.

Seven parents stated that the block had formerly been very nice, but that troublesome people had since moved in; two said

that it was noisy; two complained of the many speakeasies in the neighborhood; one complained of the lack of play space for the children; and one complained of juvenile delinquency; five residents reported aloofness, saying they did not bother with their neighbors, but seven residents stated they stayed on the block because they had their friends or relatives there; two claimed the neighborhood was nice and one praised his neighbors; two also regarded the block as better than "the old country."

The material advantages of residence were very apparent in the minds of many of these block residents; 22 stated that it was near their place of work or their business, and they could save time and carfare; ten praised the cheapness of the rent; five liked the fresh air; eight, on the other hand, complained that the landlords would not make repairs; eight stated they would have moved to better quarters if they could; 2 complained of high rentals; sixteen, however, sadly admitted they had to remain on the block because they could not afford to live elsewhere.

Several of the older residents were more voluble in their statements. An elderly German woman who had lived thirty years on the block, was reported as follows:

"I wouldn't want to leave this block. It's home to me. In the summer I sit at the front window and see what's going on, but in the winter I move back in the kitchen and keep the front room closed, because it's cold in there and I don't see nothing, only the windows across the yard. I'd get lost if I left this block. I can't read, can't sign my name. One gets used to a place." Later, she said she would move if she could; she was tired of the block, and all the old-timers were moving away, but she spent all summer gathering wood for the fire, hurt her hands tearing iron bands from wooden crates. She'd have to sacrifice this wood if she moved. She kept the wood in a shallow cellar, which the tenants dug under the house. The tide never came in, but it did next door, in a deep cellar, when exceptionally high at flood. "The block isn't as gay and friendly as it used to be. Then there were the saloons, and lots of music and everybody was friendly. Now it's all new faces."

A Polish mother, twenty-two years on the block, was reported in the worker's notes as follows:

Neighborhood has changed. Old neighbors have moved away. Would move away too if she could afford, but can't even hire a truckman. Besides, mother is afraid of the unknown. "Perhaps if I go into new block, say in Brooklyn, they think me rich, and kidnap children. No, I stay right here till all children bigger." Doesn't like neighbors, they are all jealous over her pension. Threaten always when in a quarrel with her, to have city take away her pension. Denies any basis for breaking up home. Says, "I don't have no one come to see me, except girls come up." Bad neighborhood influences, says mother; boys steal and go to jail.

An Irish woman who had lived fifty-five years on the block and thirty-five years in the same house, stated:

This neighborhood isn't what it used to be years ago. Then there were nice people living here. Nobody does anything for the kids on this block except Johnny ———<sup>10</sup> who gives the kids a party every summer out of his own pocket. But he used to live here as a boy and he remembers when he didn't have any seat in his pants.

Aside from minor quarrels of neighbors and some slight antipathies, no deep racial prejudices seemed evident among these people. In fact, just the opposite feeling existed, that of neighborly kindness, "helping to mind the children" while the neighbor worked, or visiting in each other's apartments. This friendly attitude was reflected among the children, who seemed to have not the slightest bit of racial discrimination. The attitude toward certain families was less favorable and many neighbors were caustically critical of those families whose moral and ethical standards seemed to them below par. As in any closely confined community, these people knew a great deal of each other's business and talked freely about each other's affairs.

The judgments that were expressed were of a markedly non-intellectual order, and the impression was gathered that most of these people were either very dull or very uninformed, or perhaps both. Their comments hardly at any time went beyond discussion of the immediate physical requirements of material existence. It will be noted that not a single person on the block had a constructive suggestion to make relative to the improvement either of the local block or of the neighborhood.

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<sup>10</sup> A political henchman.

## Cultural Backgrounds

The cultural status of the residents of Parnell Street was low. None of the parents could be characterized as either intelligent or educated. The range was from families that were ambitious and energetic but ignorant, down to those who were ignorant, ambitionless and with low physical and moral standards. The great majority of the families tended toward the former type, and some of these seemed to be keenly interested in furthering the education of their children.

The extent of English language usage among these families may be tentatively related to their general cultural status. Their English appeared to be adequate for employment purposes and probably represented a rough adjustment to occupational needs.

Because of the unusual discrepancies in standards of measurement between the reports of the two survey years, the language ability of residents in 1926 and 1931 could not be compared. These discrepancies arose from the lack of an objective standard of measuring linguistic achievements. Among people who have become partially assimilated, as had the Parnell Street parents, the determination of whether or not a person speaks or reads English becomes, in the absence of a definite objective measure, a matter of mere opinion. It can be reported only that in 1932 the parental group was about equally divided into those who spoke the foreign tongue only and those who spoke either their native language and English, or English exclusively. Slightly more than half of the group claimed to read only in a foreign tongue. Eighteen parents claimed to read English with ease, but a large proportion of the mothers and a small portion of the fathers admitted total illiteracy in 1932. (Table 26, Languages Spoken and Read by Parents of Parnell Street Boys.)

Although in 1926 approximately all the fathers and mothers were said to speak English, it was not usually spoken fluently, and in 43 of the homes the native tongue was preferably used. Many parents purposely used the native tongue in family life to enable their children to master it. Reading of English was mastered with difficulty, and some wished to read only well

enough to obtain citizenship papers. Thirteen of 34 fathers and 6 of 16 mothers read only a little.

There were 6 illiterate fathers and 16 illiterate mothers. In 1925 several mothers were taught English at home by a neighborhood house worker, but upon transfer of the class to the Settlement House itself, only one mother continued the course, the remainder, although expressing regret, explaining that they had not the time to make the trip.

TABLE 26

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AND READ BY PARENTS OF PARNELL STREET BOYS, 1926 AND 1932

	<i>In Home</i>		<i>Father</i>		<i>Mother</i>	
	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932
<i>Language Spoken:</i>						
English .....	9	..	52	9	53	12
English, limited extent .....	..	..	..	2	..	2
Foreign and English .....	..	..	..	20	..	21
Foreign only .....	43	..	1	29	4	32
Not stated .....	5	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Language Read:</i>						
English .....	..	..	34 *	10	16 †	8
English, limited extent .....	..	..	..	..	..	2
Foreign and limited English .....	..	..	..	11	..	3
Foreign only .....	..	..	12	34	25	35
Illiterate .....	..	..	6	4	16	19

\* Slightly 13.

† Slightly 6.

The fact that so many parents could speak English was, without doubt, an important factor in assimilation and, certainly, few of the families on the block could be regarded as definitely immigrant. On the other hand, there was little evidence that any of these families sprang from a good cultural stock abroad; the evidences were rather that they sprang from a very low cultural stratum, and carried with them to this country little or no knowledge or appreciation of their native culture. It is significant, for example, that in not a single home was there found a book or magazine in their native language.

Their adaptation to the American scene on a vocational level only was further evident in the barrenness of their homes and in the lack of American cultural influences. There were practically no books of any sort, both in 1926 and 1932. In the latter year sixty families had no books whatsoever, and only one family had twenty or more, the four remaining having less than ten books each. Even these few cases hardly deserve credit as evidences of cultural adaptation, since in every instance the books were children's school books.

The lack of frequent communication of this group with others outside of the block was indicated by the small number of families possessing telephones. Sixty-two families had no telephone, two possessed them, and a third had a store telephone.

The radio had made remarkably little progress among these people, only eight of the sixty-five families possessing sets in 1932.<sup>11</sup> Only two families had pianos, but seventeen had phonographs. In general, one might say that the use of the home as a source of entertainment was observed in less degree here than in the other blocks studied.

### The Role of Social Institutions in Family Life

Both in 1926 and 1932, the institution having the greatest claim upon the people of this block was the church. Church attendance was regarded by many parents as an important Sunday observance, not only because of its religious significance, but because it brought together groups of similar races, with mutual interests. Although some of the churches were out of the neighborhood, and several were uptown, approximately one-half of the fathers attended regularly, and often brought their sons with them. However, fewer fathers attended church in 1932 than in 1926.

Only a small number of parents were members of neighborhood settlement houses. In 1926, three mothers were members of the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association but in 1932, no parents were members. This was all the more striking in view of the extraordinary number of contacts this progressive community center had had with the parents, largely in connection

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<sup>11</sup> This item was not reported upon in 1926.

with the health work of its various clinics and with the social activities conducted for the benefit of the children. Despite these contacts and the employment of a permanent field staff of visiting nurses who visited the mothers frequently at home, this organization did not take root among the parent generation as a place where they might meet or enjoy recreation. It must be remembered, however, that the mothers in this block were by and large a very hard-working group, with very little time for their own recreation.

Although there were several other community centers in the immediate neighborhood, none of the parents belonged. Only one mother belonged to the Public School Mothers' Club in 1926, and none in 1932.

Sixteen fathers and four mothers belonged to fraternal organizations in 1926; but in 1932, due no doubt to the depression, all but one father and one mother were eliminated from these society memberships. Practically all of these societies were European groups, such as the "American-Russian Sokol" and the "Carpatha-Russian Club", and helped maintain the contact of these people with their own nationals. Only one group benefited in membership in 1932 over 1926, and that was the local Tammany political organization, "The Johnny H— Democratic Club", which claimed six parent members in 1932—four fathers and two mothers. A few parents belonged to benefit societies, but these were protective rather than social in nature.

The number of parents having no organization interests whatsoever was not recorded in 1926, but in 1932 there were forty fathers and thirty-seven mothers without any group affiliations. The conclusion may be drawn, therefore, that in the latter survey year the majority of parents were without a group life outside of the immediate family and friendship circle.

Other social and recreational interests were relatively limited in 1926 since the working hours of the mothers did not allow much time for pleasures outside of the home. During their free time, in the afternoons and on Sundays, it was their custom to rest. In connection with club affiliations, occasional family parties and picnics took place. Very few parents attended the movies. The fathers reported that they did not care for them, and those

mothers who did attend went only in the company of their younger children.

### Adult Anti-Social Behavior

An intensive record of crime on Parnell Street was obtained from the dockets of the First and Tenth District Magistrates' Courts and from the Manhattan Borough Domestic Relations Court. These courts were not the only ones in which block residents might have appeared, but they were the ones in which appearance was most likely.

In 1926 a total of 118 cases were arraigned from this block in the above mentioned Magistrates' Courts. The proportion of serious and minor offenses was relatively similar to that for the same offenses throughout the city. While there were few felony and major misdemeanor charges, the proportion of lesser misdemeanor and corporation ordinance violation charges was large. The number of arraignments cited included duplications, certain individuals having been arraigned a number of times each. Thus, one individual was arrested nineteen times during two years, usually for violation of corporation ordinances in the conduct of his business as a peddler. There were no arrests for prostitution or on Federal charges, for operating speakeasies.

Not all of the offenses could be attributed to true residents of the block. At the corner of this block, facing Battery Park, was a lodging house frequented by negro laborers and white derelicts, which was given as a residence by 23 men charged with minor offenses, involving gambling and begging.

Three men arrested in 1926 on serious offenses still lived on the block at the time of re-survey in 1932, and were still among the most unruly persons on the block. All of those arraigned were men, with the exception of two women, of whom one was arraigned seven times for violation of corporation ordinances, and the other, once, on a similar charge.

During 1926 there were five felony arraignments, three for grand larceny, one for robbery and one for burglary; three serious misdemeanors, one case of illegal possession of a deadly weapon, one case of impairing the morals of a minor and one case of



simple assault; 109 cases of lesser misdemeanors and violations of corporation ordinances involving such offenses as shooting crap, playing cards, engaging in malicious mischief, peddling without a license, soliciting alms, etc.<sup>12</sup> One boy was arraigned by his parents as a wayward minor.

The proportion of cases dismissed and discharged was high among the more serious charges, but was relatively low among the less serious charges. Among eight cases in the felony and serious misdemeanor category, there were five dismissals and one discharge in the Magistrates' court.<sup>13</sup> Two cases in this group were found guilty and committed.

In the lesser misdemeanor and corporation ordinance group, dismissals and discharges numbered only 12 out of the total of 110 cases. The most usual punishment was a small fine, ranging generally from \$1.00 to \$5.00, 64 cases having been disposed of in this fashion. Nineteen cases were given suspended sentences without probation and fourteen were committed to the workhouse. One wayward minor youth was placed on probation. The very limited use of probation by the New York City Magistrates' Courts was strikingly illustrated in these block statistics.

An intimate picture of the social delinquencies of block members was obtained from interviews with block residents and from the resident workers in a nearby neighborhood house.

The number of families in which one or more members were guilty of criminally flagrant behavior was astonishingly high. Fifteen of the 65 families interviewed in 1932, or 23%, had been implicated in crime. The block had once had a reputation among the welfare workers in the neighborhood as being a really criminal neighborhood, but in 1932 it was considered "nice and quiet". The reader may draw his own deduction as to what the neighborhood must have been like in the past. On the other hand, certain of the old residents insisted that the block was formerly very nice, but that a rough element had come in. The

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<sup>12</sup> There were 52 cases of disorderly conduct, 48 violations of corporation ordinances, 8 cases of intoxication, and 1 violation of the Sanitary Code.

<sup>13</sup> A court of original jurisdiction, comparable to a municipal or police court in other cities.

truth is, probably, that the block was, and continued to be, a center for serious criminal activity.

There were five cases of desertion by the husband. In one, a Syrian had abandoned his wife and five children, ten years previously. The wife and girls lived with another man, and the maternal grandmother on Parnell Street provided a home for a boy. In another case, a young Czecho-Slovakian had deserted his wife and two children five years before. The field investigator stated with regard to this case:

Her husband left her five years ago. He used to drink and never wanted to work. She used to keep three jobs and husband never kept a job for more than three weeks. Had him put in workhouse for non-support for six months, but said she doesn't see what good it did him. When he was there she had to work just the same, and when he came back home started all over again. She is glad he is gone for good, and hopes he never comes and bothers her again. Girl, twelve, used to remember how he used to hit mother when drunk.

She gets her rent from a charitable organization and keeps two jobs. Saves as much as she can to be able to help children to continue through high school.

In a third case, an enforced separation of a couple led to desertion. In a fourth case, there was desertion and adultery, the latter not a crime in New York State. The adulteress in this instance was named as a block menace, her wont being to entice young men to live with her for short periods and to steal for her support. In substantiation of this claim, a young man of twenty-five was found living with her and was represented to the field visitor as her husband, although the latter, a deserter, was thirty-four years old. A boy of fifteen, son of the woman, lived in this home. The wife's behavior was apparently only a part of a familial trend for her own mother lived in the adjoining rooms and was said to offer no objection to her conduct. The field visitor reported as follows on the mother:

Whether these people have an unsavory reputation or not, the mother in appearance, belies her reputation. She is a quiet-mannered, soft spoken old lady, fond of gossiping, and rather friendly. She was reticent regarding her married children, however. She is

Polish, but looks German. Occupies four rooms, one whole side of floor. Has large front and back rooms and two small, dark, inner bedrooms.

Says she has been forty years on block. Can remember when from Bowling Green far uptown there were no large office buildings, only small houses occupied by families. She herself lived many years in a boarding house on the site of the Whitehall Building. There she met her husband, a boarder in her family. After marriage, she had all kinds of trouble with him, and had to support him. She had to clean offices, and he sat around, and all he did was bring in firewood. Then in summer he would disappear, and come back in winter, saying he was a chef; but he never gave her any money. He spent it all in the saloons. So after five or six years of this, the boys said, "Pop, there's the door." He hung around the neighborhood for awhile, but she wouldn't look at him and turned her head when she passed him, so he left the block.

The family has an unsavory neighborhood reputation. At least two girls and two boys are living with men and women, not married to them. One daughter, 29, has four children, illegitimate, all by same man, without marrying.

A neighborhood worker states that the oldest son, a tough, was sent to the penitentiary for one year for toting a gun and shooting a man in a free-for-all fight.

The daughter, age thirty, who lives in the same house, is a very bad neighborhood influence. She separated from her husband, a bootlegger, and took to living with an Irish chap of twenty-four, uptown, but left him and came downtown again when he was found peddling "dope." The neighborhood worker knows of two other young fellows, ages nineteen and twenty-two, who have lived with her, and whom she has influenced to steal for her. She has a neighborhood reputation of influencing young fellows of sixteen to seventeen to leave home and live with her. Her son, age fourteen, according to this informant, is a weak, easily influenced lad, and the father, a well-meaning old soul, who had a woman in Brooklyn and alternated between her and his family. The mother, he stated, was a hard drinker in the old days, and is today a ripper, a mean, quarrelsome woman.

In a fifth case, on a home visit in 1932 the wife praised her husband's conduct and said he gave her all his earnings. The visitor's impression was that the woman had been cowed into submissiveness, but it may have been a case of true reform. In

1927, the wife sought the husband's arrest, on a charge of assault, theft and desertion. He was then a heavy drinker.

In a sixth case, drunkenness and an assault led to a prison sentence for a husband, with promising results.

In another case the father was described by neighbors as being a drunkard, who was arrested one night after his six year old daughter ran to the Police Station for a policeman. This same man was said to have fired a revolver from his window during the night on one occasion.

In still another case the father, a drunkard and exhibitionist, has been in the Workhouse several times for assaults on girls and women, and for indecent exposure. In 1931, he beat his wife and laid open her scalp, but the magistrate before whom he was arraigned took no action. Both the wife and a visiting nurse reported complaints by neighbors because of his misconduct.

In another case, a Syrian step-father was suspected of sexual intimacy with his seventeen year old step-daughter. This girl, a juvenile delinquent, in 1926 forged checks and was accused of sex delinquency. She was placed in various foster homes, but made a poor adjustment. During 1929 she was noticed loitering in the Hudson Terminal waiting rooms. In 1930 she was engaged, but the troth was broken when the step-father demanded a larger dower from the groom.

A son, age 23, had been a juvenile delinquent, had stolen from his mother, and in 1923 had been committed to the Catholic Protectory for burglary.

There were no arrests for prostitution and boot-legging in 1926 and 1927, but in 1932 both types of offense were prevalent in this block.

In one case a janitress, a Czecho-Slovakian widow, mother of boys aged fourteen and nineteen, was accused by neighbors of operating a house of prostitution in two unoccupied back rooms adjacent to her flat. One neighbor told the field investigator she had seen as many as fifteen men visit the janitress in a single night, and had made complaint to the Board of Health. The woman's quarters, when visited, smelled from a still. The woman's sons, when questioned, said that the vacant rooms were occupied by unemployed women friends of their mother.

Only one professional boot-legger lived on the block. This man, referred to elsewhere in connection with his arrest in 1927 on a felonious assault charge, was interviewed by the field investigator, as he had a son aged three years.

As interviewer came upstairs man was just opening the door. Very dapper looking young man—grey suit, nice clean shirt and tie, etc. He was very reluctant at first, but later started to talk. "Why are all you people running around here all the time; you bother us so much." Visitor told him the cause and he then said, "If you people could do something to stop all this home brewing you would be doing something worth while, instead of just running around like this; why," he said, "I see boys of eleven and twelve on street with hip-flasks and drunk, how can you expect to help them—stop the home still." Visitor told him it would take a long time to educate people not to drink and meanwhile something should be done to help the boys.

Visitor later interviewed Mrs. B., living on the next floor. She told a different story. "The man has been arrested for boot-legging several times; once a couple of years ago, detectives broke through window on fire-escape and got in to house after M. had told them he didn't live there. They found the wife, asked if she was his wife. She said "no." After awhile detectives started boxing M. around. Mrs. M. got frightened and cried, "What are you doing with my husband?" At that time they found a whole outfit for brewing—press, bottles, corks and labels. Also hundreds of already bottled stuff which was ready for delivery. Detectives took everything and M. and wife had to go along in the patrol wagon. Mrs. B. said whole neighborhood was congregated outside of house and all shouted as detectives were leading out Mr. and Mrs. M. "Hurrah, this is good for you, you never wanted to do a decent day's work." Mrs. B. said M. used for transporting liquor a car which was full of cigar boxes in windows. He told visitor he was selling cigars for a Mr. B. in Brooklyn.

### Social Selection as a Factor in Crime Rate

In view of the fact that the Parnell Street block had such a large proportion of crime and family discord, the question arose as to whether, according to the point of view of some sociologists, the social pattern of life on the block tended to create criminals and vagabonds, or whether the criminal population

represented social selection. With the aim of throwing some light upon this question, the data on crime were examined with reference to the period of residence.

Thirty families had lived on the block for a period ranging from several months to ten years, and thirty families had remained on the block for a period of ten years up to fifty years. In 8 families, or 27% of the 30 or more recent dwellers, crime and family discord were found, in contrast to similar behavior among 17 families, or 53% among the 30 older block dwellers. But of the families of shorter residence, the most recent arrivals were definitely of inferior status. Thus among six families resident from 6 to 10 years, but one family was near-destitute and one with a criminal history, but among twenty-four families who had moved to the block within the five years previous to 1932, there were seven instances of criminal history and marital discord.

In other words, the extent of crime and family discord was more than twice as great among families who were longer residents than among those who were less permanent residents. The conclusion from this might be not necessarily that the social patterns of the block were producing crime, but that some sort of selective process has gone on by means of which better types of families had moved after varying shorter periods of residence, and criminalistic families had remained on the block. However, it is to be noted that among the most recent residents, those under five years, there is a greater crime and family discord rate than among those resident 6 to 10 years. Thus it would seem that two processes are going on, both contributing to the deterioration of the block; the better type families, on the one hand, have moved away, while on the other, the replacements have been of the same lower standards as those who remained.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE CHILD

#### Education

THE majority of Parnell Street boys completed their education in the elementary public school, a bare handful entered high school, and none reached college, a situation which held true both in 1926 and 1932.<sup>1</sup> It is true that there was a slight increase in the number of boys attending trade, vocational and regular high schools, but that may be attributed to the general increase in older boy population in the block in 1932 as against 1926. Sixty-four boys attended elementary school in 1926, 54 in public schools, and 10 in parochial schools. In 1932, 61 boys attended elementary schools, 51 in public schools and 10 in parochial schools. In 1926 only one boy was in high school and one in vocational high school; but in 1932, 4 were in high school, 2 were in vocational high school and 3 were in trade school.

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<sup>1</sup>The educational status of Parnell Street boys in 1926 and 1931 (1926 figures given first) was: Nursery, 4-0; kindergarten, 2-4; elementary public school, 54-51; elementary parochial school, 10-10; boarding school, 1-0; high school, 1-4; continuation school, 1-2; vocational high school, 1-2; probationary school, 0-1; trade school, 0-3. Only one boy over eighteen attended school. Among boys between 15 and 17 years, only 3 were attending high school, in either survey year.

Religious education was reported in many instances; Sunday School, 9-3; Roman Catholic instruction, 29-3; Greek Catholic instruction, 4-0; Protestant instruction, 2-0. (In this connection, a shift in church attendance should be noted; regular, 12-42; irregular, 0-27. Thus during the depression, church attendance seems to have substituted for religious instruction.) Instruction was mainly limited to boys under fourteen years. Neither school nor church had a hold on those over eighteen. In 1926, neither church attendance or religious education was reported for those between eighteen and twenty-one, and in 1932, seven in this age group were reported as attending church irregularly. A number of cases of cultural education were reported; music, 3-5; Russian, 5-0; Greek, 2-1; Arabic, 2-0; Slavic, 3-0; Latin and French, 0-1. Three cases of regular library attendance were reported in 1926 but none in 1932.

Older boys from this block dodged continuation school whenever they could. In 1932, nearly all should have been attending continuation school under the requirements of the Compulsory Education Law, which made school attendance by all boys below the age of 18 obligatory when not engaged in full-time employment. In that year only 3 out of 19 boys between the ages of 15 and 17 had full-time employment. Seven boys had part-time employment and only two were reported as being totally unemployed. The remainder, presumably, had some form of odd jobs, but only two boys were registered in continuation school, instead of the 16 who might have been expected to attend.

In neither survey year was education a burning desire among either the parents or the boys of Parnell Street. In the earlier survey year it was stated that:

No great interest in education was expressed by either parents or boys. The prevailing idea was to secure working papers when legally permissible and get a job as soon as possible, because the family needed the earnings. Education as a preparation for life or as an equipment for increased earning capacity had slight significance to the average parent and no significance to the boy. They seemed to have very few ideas about the various kinds of education obtainable or of the opportunities for securing them, not having been informed about them through the school. This was partly due to the lack of interest in intellectual pursuits, to lack of educational aspirations in the family, and partly because to live in the present absorbed all their ability and ingenuity.

The boys' lack of interest in education was correlated with lack of success in school. In 1932, out of 69 boys of school age, only 7 were accelerated, 15 were at grade, and 47 were retarded. Whereas the accelerated boys were only one-half term above grade, only 13 of the 47 retarded boys were retarded but a single term; 7 boys were retarded two terms, 13 were retarded three terms, and the remaining 14 boys were retarded four terms or more.

The children who were advanced in school were all among the younger group between the ages of 6 and 10 years. Out of 15 boys between the ages of 13 and 16, in the 6th to the 8th



grades, all but one were retarded. The majority of the boys on this street thus merely marked time in the upper grammar school grades until they were eligible for working papers. To them, secondary education was meaningless. In this connection, the 1926 findings stated that many parents thought high school for boys in this neighborhood was a waste of time because, "The boys who were supposed to be attending, were playing truant."

Although the school proficiency of Parnell Street boys was relatively poor, school failure did not appear to dishearten the majority nor cause problem behavior of a rebellious type. Despite the large proportion of juvenile delinquency in this block, very little of it seemed to be directly associated with school. Taken *en masse*, the elementary school group behaved rather well and was regular in attendance. Among 39 boys on whom school records were available, the prevailing conduct marks were A and B, the proportion of C and D conduct grades being not much more than 10% of the total of grades awarded. The tendency was for conduct ratings to be less acceptable, however, with the increase in grade. Like phenomena were noted in other blocks.

Six of 34 elementary school boys had perfect attendance during the semester; three boys had absences ranging from 6 to 10 days. Four boys, absent from 11 to 15 days, were the only ones who might be regarded as serious truants. Five boys in 1926 and 5 in 1932 had well-defined school conflicts. Marked resentment against individual teachers was reported in 6 of these instances, based on claims of impatient and rough treatment. There was no indication that child guidance supervision had been undertaken with any of the Parnell Street school boys.

School maladjustment, however, is not always a resultant of teacher-pupil conflict. It may frequently result from a special disability expressed in a deficiency in a given subject. Unfortunately, neither in 1926 nor in 1932 did the school system make adequate provision for remedial teaching, or even for coaching of deficiencies. Among 39 Parnell Street boys whose school records were scanned, 11 had deficiencies in special subjects. Arithmetic deficiencies which were most frequent, constituted an important problem, in view of the desire of a number of the

boys to enter trades where mathematical ability would have been advantageous. The majority of the disabilities dealt with acquisition of language; speech, reading, spelling, phonetics and penmanship having been among the subjects listed as deficient. In several instances during both survey years there were specific examples of boys whose school attitude might have been improved by remedial teaching.

A small proportion of parents, 5 in 1926 and 7 in 1932, were favorable in their attitude toward education and encouraged their boys in their ambitions for higher training. Thus in 1926 a father whose boy had not been doing well in school, encouraged him by promising him a summer vacation if he made better marks the next semester. This father said, "I want him to have a better schooling than I had. I want him to do better work. I told him to learn good, so he will have a better job."

In other instances there was conflict between parents and children over the desire for education, the children wishing to attend school but the parents disagreeing.

The proportion of boys ambitious for further educational training was markedly greater in 1932 than in 1926. In the earlier year ten boys expressed vague ambitions for the future, but in 1932, 14 boys expressed relatively specific ambitions. The majority favored either mechanical trades or technical training at the professional level.

A surprising number of boys were attracted to the electrical trade. Of the 14 who expressed ambitions, 7 wished to become electricians and 2 wished to become electrical engineers. A possible explanation of the tremendous popularity of this trade is the fact that a number of the older brothers had taken this course while in continuation school.

### Cultural Education

Cultural education outside of school hours suffered somewhat in the depression year. In 1926, 15 boys were obtaining special training either in music or in languages. In 1932, however, only 7 boys were obtaining such instruction, despite the fact that the proportion of older boys was greater in that year. The voca-

tional motive was strong among boys undertaking musical training. Three boys in 1926, two playing the violin and one playing the accordion, hoped some day to supplement their earnings through their musical proficiency. Twelve boys were receiving instruction in their parental language in 1926, but only two received such instruction in 1932. It is difficult to determine in this instance whether the change was due entirely to the economic depression, or whether it represented a change in parental attitude toward the importance of the mother tongue.

Library attendance was very infrequent, although not surprisingly so, in view of the large demands made upon the spare time of the boys on this street. In 1926 only three boys attended the library at Bowling Green Neighborhood House, and in 1932 no boys were listed as library patrons. In 1926 the boys said they were "too busy to read", but they did read the daily newspapers regularly, preferably the tabloids.

### Religious Education

The strong hold of the church upon the residents on this block was shown in the large number of boys who attended church or obtained religious instruction. A marked change, however, took place in 1932 as contrasted with 1926. In the earlier year, church attendance was noted in only twelve cases, whereas Sunday school and religious instruction was noted in 44 instances. In 1932 only six of the boys had religious instruction, but 71 attended church.

There is no satisfactory explanation of this shift, save the possibility that church attendance was less expensive than religious instruction, or that the pressure upon these boys to obtain lucrative employment was so great during the depression year that there was no time left for religious instruction.

### Health and Medical Care

The majority of Parnell Street boys were examined in 1932, by Board of Health physicians in the public schools, but these examinations generally covered only obvious defects. Practically

all of the examinations disclosed defects. Only four of fifty-two who were examined were pronounced to be in perfect health. Twenty-one boys had only one physical defect; ten boys had two defects; twelve had three, and five boys had four or more.

The most common defects were dental caries (31 cases), hypertrophied tonsils (23 cases) defective nutrition (17 cases), defective vision (11 cases) obstructed nasal breathing (10 cases); 5 boys, one of whom was reported as completely deaf, had defective hearing; one child had an orthopedic defect, and one had undergone an appendectomy. No cases of nervous diseases, cardiac defect, or glandular defect were reported.

The most discouraging aspect of the school medical examination was the small number of cases in which improvement was reported. In eight cases the improvement consisted usually of a prescription of eyeglasses for poor vision, and in one case of dental treatment, which was given. School record cards did not indicate that an effective or aggressive health improvement campaign took place among these children. In many cases school examinations were given at adequately frequent intervals, but in many other cases not more than one or two examinations had been given during the school life of the child. In seven instances there was no record of any physical examination.

A more adequate picture of the health of Parnell Street boys was obtained from the 1932 field records of the investigators, which disclosed that the great majority of these boys had been examined at hospitals or clinics. Only 22 of 117 boys had never been seen by a physician, the remaining 95 having been examined at hospitals, clinics and neighborhood health centers in addition to their routine school physical examinations. This high proportion of health examinations was a result of the intensive health work conducted by the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association, at which center 72 of the 95 boys examined had received their examinations.

The tremendous obstacles to be met by even the most progressive health program were indicated on this block. Among the 95 boys who had received medical examinations, 51 were apparently without defect at the time of the survey. Of these, 28 had previously undergone various types of remedial treatment,

such as dental care, tonsillectomies, prescriptions for lenses, etc. There remained, however, 44 boys with chronic defects, which at the time of interview had been untreated. Among these, 36 had one defect and 8 had multiple defects. Among those boys having but one defect, the most common were carious teeth (15 cases); and visual defects (5 cases); 10 boys, in addition to chronic defects, had suffered acute illness or injury, including pneumonia, spinal meningitis, infantile paralysis, mastoiditis and appendicitis. Treatments were given at six institutions, three in lower Manhattan and three uptown.

Intimate contact with families disclosed a remarkable degree of ignorance regarding child health, both in 1926 and 1932. In the earlier year the surveyor stated that "the same indifferent attitude toward health exists among these families as among the Fleet Street and Tyler Street families. It is only in time of acute illness that they become aroused."

In 1932 a number of instances of appalling ignorance of health practices were disclosed through the case inquiries. Many younger mothers, particularly those of foreign birth, complained of having feeding problems with their younger children. Inability to obtain a balanced diet and lack of appetite were the two usual complaints. This problem was closely related to the lack of parental supervision in this block, occasioned by the employment of a large proportion of the mothers, as a result of which the great majority of the children were allowed either to purchase their own food-stuffs or eat at irregular times.

In some cases there was either apathetic non-cooperation by the parents in the health program of the neighborhood house, or even active opposition and hostility. In one case a boy of 14 refused to wear his spectacles, stating that he did not need them, and his mother refused to urge him to wear them. Another boy with a severe internal strabismus (cross eye), was allowed to go untreated, as his mother refused to believe that his condition harmed his vision. In another flagrant case a boy developed poor eye sight as a result of trachoma, but the mother insisted that the boy's vision was good.

In another instance a mother refused to give consent for a tonsillectomy on her son, but in the face of this definite medical

recommendation stated to the field investigator, "We took him to all the doctors, and they could not tell what was wrong with him." Another mother refused to have her children undergo tonsillectomies, stating that she believed in "letting children die with everything they come into the world with." Only a few mothers on the block seemed to have intelligent ideas relative to the care of their children, and only one mother knew how to use and read a clinical thermometer.

It is difficult to compare the physical status of these children in 1926 and 1932. In the earlier year the statement was made that no acute cases of illness or of handicapping physical condition were found, but that some of the younger boys looked frail and undernourished. In contrast with this statement were the more recent findings, that 44 boys had chronic untreated defects.

### Employment of Boys

The number of boys of working age in Parnell Street increased from 19 in 1926 to 36 in 1932. As the majority of these boys were old residents, they represented the normal age increase in the boy population since the last survey. The employment situation, however, was not altogether the same as it was in 1926, when the boys on the block expected to work, and usually did work, beginning at a very early age.

There was little change in the amount of opportunity offered by jobs in both survey years. Seventy per cent of the boys in 1932 engaged in unskilled work, as against 75% in 1926. The trend was not as noticeable in the direction of jobs with opportunity as it was among adults, where unskilled employment dropped from 80% to 66% between the two survey years.

The boys in both years represented a more diversified occupational group than did their parents, although both groups engaged in unskilled labor incidental to the operation of commercial rather than manufacturing enterprises. There was not a single factory worker among the parents, and only one among the boys.

Both fathers and boys worked in the financial district, the fathers as porters, primarily, and the boys at a variety of tasks

without future, shining shoes, peddling newspapers, running errands, as hall boys, etc. They belonged to the great army of unskilled workers, who occupy a middle ground between the factory laborer and the white collar clerk.

Unemployment among boys reached 26% in 1932, as against 17% in 1926. Furthermore, in 1932, wages were sharply cut in this age group. In 1926 boys of seventeen years and up earned a minimum of \$15.00 per week, and as high as \$25.00 per week. Work was plentiful among boys aged 16 and under, and ten were engaged in such tasks as selling newspapers and running errands at incomes up to \$10.00 per week. In 1932, however, the economic depression changed all this; although the number of boys of working age had increased, the number of boys under 16 having jobs dropped from 10 to 3. Incomes likewise tumbled. The top salary was \$19.00 instead of \$25.00, and the majority of the boys earned less than \$10.00 a week, the average income having declined from approximately \$11.70 in 1926 to approximately \$7.60 in 1932.

In neither year was employment sought systematically. Employment agencies, newspaper advertisements and other impersonal means were not used. Boys depended upon the aid of friends and direct personal inquirer.

### Employment and Vocational Guidance

Guidance in the selection of a vocation or in the choice of vocational training was extremely rare. It was flatly stated in 1926 that "no boy, either at school or at work, had ever heard of vocational guidance or vocational teachers, and no teacher in school had ever suggested to him either the job to look for or the place to get it." A few boys referred to the possibility of getting a job through the Bowling Green Neighborhood House, but no boy at that time had been among those who got jobs through that facility.

These conclusions must, in the main, be repeated for 1932 since in that year, in only six instances did guidance take place. Four of these cases involved trade training, and all, interestingly enough, involved boys taking the electrician's course, either at

vocational high school, evening school, or continuation school. This training served to influence the ambitions of these boys in the direction of that trade.

The lack of vocational guidance, either by parents or schools, was further indicated by the small number of boys who had plans for the future, or whose parents had plans for their future. In only thirteen cases did boys express a desire for future education or specific occupation, and only two parents had any concept thereof. Most parents and boys, despite repeated questioning, expressed no ideas, save the vague one of having a job.

The ambitions that were expressed, however, were all definitely in advance of the status of the parents. Only one boy, aged seventeen, desired an unskilled occupation, that of truck driver. Two wished to become civil servants—one a policeman, and the other a fireman; four wished to enter the electrician's trade, and two wished to become aviators. Three had professional goals, one in journalism, one in pharmacy and one in electrical engineering. None of the ambitions may be called fanciful in nature, although, among the younger boys, it is questionable whether they represented true ambitions or merely wishes of the moment.

Part time occupations were engaged in primarily by school boys, after school and on Saturdays.<sup>2</sup> Only one boy worked at night in 1926, and none in 1932. Roughly one-third of the boys between the ages of ten and fourteen were reported as doing after-school work during both years. They watched automobiles, sold newspapers, shined shoes, ran errands, helped in their fathers' stores, and gathered wood for the family. One boy in 1932 was in the minor racket of opening cab doors. The number of errand boys decreased from 1926 to 1932, but the number engaged in shining shoes increased.

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<sup>2</sup> Part-time employment of Parnell Street boys, after school and on Saturday, consisted of the following jobs: (1926 figures given first) Age-group 10-14 years, auto watcher, 1-0; newsboy, 2-4; errand boy, 4-0; gathering kindling wood, 2-1; helping in father's store, 2-1; running errands for crippled mother, 1-0; shining shoes, 0-5; opening cab doors, 0-1; ages 15-19 years, newsboy 3-2; errand boy, 0-1; gathering wood, 1-0; helping in father's store, 0-2; bootblack, 0-1; newspaper carrier, 0-1. One boy in the 10-14 age group worked evenings at an unspecified occupation.



Although only one-third of the boys were recorded as working in both years, it was stated in 1926, that probably every boy old enough, although not always reported, earned money, even though he did not have a steady job. If the boys did not work for money, they assumed at an early age the responsibility of keeping the family supplied with wood, as no family bought fuel, winter or summer. Every day after school groups of children, often accompanied by their parents, would carry arms full of wood home, to be cut and piled in wood-sheds. In 1932 the gathering of fuel was likewise frequently noted, but there was less casual money earning on the street.

Very few of the boys were reported as disliking work, and the few cases of complete idleness in either year was a striking indication of industriousness. In 1932 only two boys disliked work, and these were definitely delinquent, one being a drunkard and the other a thief.

The economic depression, however, had its effect upon industriousness in many instances by frustrating worthwhile ambitions. Thus one boy of fifteen who wished to become an electrician was compelled to work only as a street ice cream vendor. Another boy of seventeen who wished to become an aviator, had been unemployed since leaving school, with the exception of several weeks of employment as an office boy. A boy of twenty-one, apprentice to a mechanic, had been unemployed for many months. A boy of nineteen who took up the electrical course at continuation school, and would have liked to become an electrician if he could, worked as a telegraph messenger boy.

A boy of seventeen, who wanted to become a mechanic, had been working since the age of fourteen as a telegraph messenger. A boy of seventeen and a half, who took trade training as a carpenter, had to work as a shipping clerk, and was seeking to become a truck driver. Thus some boys who wished to be skilled workmen, had to be content with blind-alley jobs; others were forced to go without any employment.

## Leisure Time Activities

The play world of the average Parnell Street boy was narrowly restricted. Younger boys played on the home street, in adjacent blocks, or in the backyard, took trips to a park and playground less than a block away, and went to the glamorous water front, a stone's throw from their homes. Until its doors closed, the Bowling Green Neighborhood House was the outstanding recreational influence in the neighborhood, and a considerable portion of the spare time of boys from the ages of 6 to 17 was spent there. The home hardly counted as a play place. (Table 27, Recreational Affiliations, Interests and Play Places of Parnell Street Boys, 1926 and 1932.)

Movies were the outstanding commercial resource, making an almost universal appeal. During the summer, this program was varied by camp attendance and swimming. In general, there was not much play activity among these boys, for most of them lacked the time.

## Play in the Home

Since the majority of Parnell Street families lived in two, three and four room flats, it was not surprising that most of the boys preferred to spend their spare hours elsewhere, both in 1926 and in 1932. In 1926, six boys had victrolas in the home, one had a radio and one a piano. For lack of space, boys did not bring their friends to listen to victrolas, and, in general, there was very little visiting of boys at each other's homes. In 1932 the victrola was not even mentioned as a source of pleasure, although seventeen families still had music boxes. In only one case did a boy specifically mention his radio as a source of enjoyment, and in two cases each the piano and guitar were named as means of entertainment. Only two boys were reported in 1932 by the field investigator as spending any of their time in the home. One, a loafer of twenty, liked to lie around the house reading cheap novels, and the other, a boy of seventeen, was reported by his mother as being unusually quiet, caring neither for dances nor

for girls, and having only one friend. This boy spent his evenings listening to the radio.

Neither in 1926 nor in 1932 were games of any description seen in the home. In the latter year, packs of playing cards were the only play materials seen.

### Street Play

Both in 1926 and in 1932 the street was the main play place, particularly for children between the ages of six and fourteen years. Mothers were rightly fearful, for play on this block was decidedly dangerous because of the narrowness of the street and the heavy automobile traffic going to and from the docks. During a two-week period of investigation in 1926 several escapes were observed, and one small boy was seriously injured, having been knocked off the curbstone and run over by a truck. In 1932, two Parnell Street children were reported injured, one on the home street and another, a boy of seven, on an adjacent street, the latter having been struck by a car while being chased from a horse watering stand by a man.

The favorite sports were "tin can football" and "hand ball." The younger boys had practically no carts, toys, or the usual materials of childhood, although they sometimes played marbles on the sidewalk. More often they improvised toys and games out of pieces of wood or junk. The roof was reported by very few boys as a play place, but a larger number used it than was reported, especially for crap games.

The backyard was reported in 1926 to be a play place for children below the age of nine in only six instances, in contrast to thirty-seven instances in 1932. The belief of the writer is that this does not indicate a tremendous change in the play habits of young Parnell Street children, but indicates rather a more careful count during the latter survey year, inasmuch as the condition of the backyards had not changed appreciably during the interim period. Hardly any of the backyards afforded a fit place for a child to play, either from the standpoint of cleanliness or available play space. Only one boy was reported as making the street corner his rendezvous, but from observation, many boys loitered in doorways, if not actually on the corner.

## SLUMS OF NEW YORK

TABLE 27  
RECREATIONAL AFFILIATIONS, INTERESTS, AND PLAY PLACES OF PARNELL STREET BOYS, 1926 AND 1932

Place of Recreation:	Ages												
	Totals		2-5 Years		6-9 Years		10-14 Years		15-17 Years		18-21 Years		
	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	1926	1932	
<i>Home:</i>													
Musical instruments .....	2	4	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	4	
Radio and victrola .....	7	1	1	..	2	..	4	..	..	1	..	..	
<i>Outdoor:</i>													
Local parks .....	71	..	16	..	26	..	24	..	4	..	1	..	
Local playgrounds .....	10	40	..	4	7	16	3	15	..	5	..	..	
Street, yards .....	76	129	7	26	37	47	28	32	4	15	..	9	
Roofs .....	1	4	1	..	..	..	..	2	..	2	..	..	
Piers .....	5	17	..	..	..	4	2	4	3	4	..	5	
<i>Supervised Indoor Clubs:</i>													
Church clubs .....	17	3	..	..	1	..	10	1	3	1	3	1	
Settlement House clubs .....	35	2	4	..	10	1	15	..	3	1	3	..	
Public school clubs .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Other .....	1	7	..	..	..	1	1	2	..	2	..	2	
<i>Un-supervised Clubs:</i>													
Baseball clubs .....	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	
Social clubs .....	3	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	2	..	..	..	
Aviation club .....	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	
<i>Commercial Recreations:</i>													
Motion pictures .....	47	66	1	..	18	18	15	21	5	13	8	14	
Other theatres .....	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	
Opera .....	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	
Pool rooms .....	10	5	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	1	8	3	



The open spaces near the docks were favorite play spots of the older boys in both survey years, although the number in 1932 was several times as large as in 1926. This place was especially preferred on Sundays and holidays, when there was practically no traffic, and baseball games could be played.

### Parks and Playgrounds

Battery Park and the Battery playground, both within a stone's throw of Parnell Street, were the natural play places of a large proportion of the boys. Although no report was given on the use of the park in 1932, many more reported the use of the playground in 1932 than in 1926. This shift, if a true one, cannot be accounted for. The figures probably cannot be taken at their face value, for in 1932 many mothers spoke of taking their younger children to Battery Park for airing.

Children in both survey years complained of their inability to carry on baseball games in the park without being chased by the police, who forbade the use of hard balls and bats because of the danger to pedestrians and visitors. A visit to the park during play hours in 1926 revealed how adept the boys were at evading the police. They knew the policeman's time of arrival, and existing baseball games on the forbidden grass would disperse a few seconds prior to his appearance on the scene. During his absence, however, they used the "Keep off the grass" signs for bases. The mother of a young delinquent reported that when her son was arraigned in the Children's Court, the judge turned to the police officer, saying, "You chase boys away from Battery Park when they play on the grass. Where do you expect them to play? That's the way they get into trouble."

Young boys accompanied their parents or older sisters to the park in the summer when homes were unendurably hot. The playground in Battery Park was used by very few children in 1926, the objection being that it was too near the street, and therefore dangerous, although it was enclosed with a low fence. The boys seemed to prefer the freedom of the park itself and of the water's edge. Lines of boys were always in evidence on the docks whenever large or interesting boats were passing by.

## Supervised Recreation

This block had the unusual advantage of being very close to the Bowling Green Neighborhood House, one of the most progressive and effective neighborhood houses in New York City. Unfortunately, the shift of population from that neighborhood was so great during the interval between the two survey years, that the directors of the House, rather than operate a large institution for the benefit of a small neighborhood group, abandoned the project entirely, and in 1932 closed their doors as a neighborhood center. The loss was one the neighborhood could ill afford, for this House had made in many ways a most effective contribution to neighborhood life. Practically every child and every family on the block had received some benefit from it, either through the home nursing service, the medical clinic, the prenatal and infant care station, the summer outings and camp visits, or the gymnasium, clubs and other social activities of the House. In 1926, thirty-five Parnell Street boys, exclusive of those sent on day outings or attending the House clinic, had gone to the Neighborhood House for gymnasium, library and special clubs. Twenty-nine of the boys were between the ages of 6 and 14, and six were between the ages of 15 and 21 years old. The latter were chiefly interested in the organized social and athletic clubs, which they attended at least three or four evenings a week. These clubs included week-end trips and summer camping in their program. In 1932, thirty-four boys from the block were reported as having had past memberships in the House. By the time of re-survey the House had given up its boys' club activities.

Only two other neighborhood recreational centers were of influence in this block, the Parish House of St. Peter's Church, and the Parish House of Trinity Church. A handful of boys attended the gymnasium, movies and Holy Name Society at St. Peter's Church in 1926, but none were reported as members in 1932. A few were members of Trinity Church in 1926, but only one was reported in 1932. A small number of older boys, however, had branched out into other affiliations in the latter year. Three boys accompanied their parents to a Czecho-Slovakian social club, and one each belonged to a local Demo-

cratic Club, the Hudson Terminal Club, the Staten Island Parish Club, and the American Society for the Promotion of Aviation.

The delinquent boys of the block were, generally speaking, not fond of organized indoor activities, and interviews with the head boys' worker of the Bowling Green Neighborhood House disclosed a great mortality in House membership among the rougher element on the block.

### Independent Clubs

In 1926 three, and in 1932, two, boys were members of independent social clubs. The "Parnells" were a baseball team, with no meeting place except the street corner, or sometimes a candy store. They usually played their games on West Street, near the piers. The "Blue Eagles" were more fortunate; their meeting place was a room obligingly loaned by one member who maintained a lodging house. This club played ball in the summer and went in for boxing in the winter. One of its members who formerly belonged to the Bowling Green House said: "I don't like that kind of a place. I do not like such places, run by rich people. I will never go there again."

Both of these clubs consisted of local groups of young boys. In comparison, there was the Rovers A. C., begun as the "Rough Riders" in 1925, with a nucleus of twelve Parnell Street boys, about 14 years old, all of whom at one time or another had been in a sectarian reformatory school. By 1932 they had all moved from the block with the exception of one boy.

They were the terrors of the neighborhood. In 1926 they robbed a haberdashery store, and all of the members blossomed out on the street with new shirts and ties. In two years they changed their name to the Buffalo Social Club and enlarged their membership to twenty, taking in the rougher boys in the neighborhood. At that time the members were all either Slovak or Irish, and members in good standing at the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association.

In November, 1925, they asked permission to hold a party after having been in the House two weeks. They then began to



take in as members past neighborhood residents who had moved to New Jersey, Brooklyn and uptown and sought invitations from other clubs to attend dances in other parts of the city. In April, 1926, they asked for a House dance, but the House Council voted it down, as the House opposed public dancing.

The "Buffaloes" then quit Bowling Green, and for a year hung about on an adjacent street corner. In 1927 they asked to be readmitted and were accepted. By this time the club had forty-two members who held meetings at Bowling Green, but were very secretive about their activities.

In 1928 they leased the top floor of an old building in a neighboring block and obtained a charter as an independent club, with political affiliations, and a membership numbering sixty, ranging in age from 16 to 40 years. The club quickly became a definite menace. Politicians aided them, protected their beer parties and crap games. Boys stayed away from home, slept there overnight, and brought their girls overnight also. Members were protected from arrest by local politicians. One member was arrested three times for grand larceny, and each time was released through the interference of an Assemblyman. In 1930, out of the original block group four were policemen, two were firemen and two were in jail, one for selling dope and one for robbery.

The depression, fortunately, ended this club. Unable to pay their rent, they were forced to give up their quarters in April, 1931, and since their membership was scattered over the entire city, they were forced to disband.

### Commercial Recreations

Commercial recreations made a small appeal to the boys of this block. There were practically no commercial recreations on the block itself, except for several cafes, which did not appeal to this age group, and one small pool room, in which some of the more mischievous boys on the block loitered. At the time of the re-survey this pool room had been open only a short time. Two pool rooms on the next street were frequented by boys from the block. Of these, one had a very excellent reputation. It was described by the boys in 1926 in the following terms:

We can play pool for forty cents, listen to the radio and drink coffee. No swearing or gambling is allowed. Even the Priest comes down, and says it's all right. Mr. C., who keeps it, has been here for years, and is a good man. You don't have to play pool unless you want to.

It is pleasant to record that this same public spirited pool room owner still maintained the same place at the time of re-survey in 1932, and that the praise given to him by the boys in the earlier year was repeated and the high standards that he maintained were confirmed by the head boys' worker of the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association. This man's success in operating a high-class pool room is proof that it is not the game itself, but the manner of man who operates the pool room that determines its influence upon the community.

As in other blocks, the movies made a strong appeal to all children above the age of 6, and was second only to street play as a major recreation. In 1932, 66, and in 1926, 47, boys attended movies, contrary to what might have been expected, in view of the depression and the small number of boys who had employment in 1932. However, a portion of this increase was undoubtedly due to the fact that the number of older boys (15-21 years old) increased sharply during the latter survey year, as also did their movie attendance in contrast to the slight increase during that year in the attendance of lower age groups. In general, the depression apparently did not affect movie attendance on this block.

In 1926, 47 of 100 boys stated that they attended the movies as regularly as two or three times a week, and always on Sunday. During both survey years, the largest number of movie fans were between the ages of six and fourteen years. Movie attendance in 1926 was tied up to a slight extent with lack of parental control.

Ten boys in 1926 and five in 1932, most of whom were above sixteen years of age, acknowledged pool room attendance. Prize fights attracted six boys above eighteen in 1932, but none in 1926. Such recreational activities as bowling, attending dance halls, and gambling, were each practiced by one boy among the group over eighteen in 1932. Only one boy in either year attended the the-

ater, and only one boy in 1926 attended grand opera. In general, the commercial recreations patronized by this block were of the cheaper and non-educational variety.

The chief summer activity of the boys from this block was swimming, as might have been expected of children who lived practically at the water's edge, but not all were particular as to where they swam. In 1926, five, and in 1932, fifteen, swam in the polluted waters of the North River, off the docks. Seven, in 1932, swam in the Bowling Green pool, and 32 in 1926 swam in the floating pool at Battery Park which, because of water pollution, was not in existence in 1932. Therefore, in 1932, a considerable number, thirty-four in all, attended Coney Island and other beaches. More boys went swimming in 1932 than in 1926.

Only a small proportion of boys enjoyed camp privileges, 6 in 1926 and 18 in 1932. In the latter survey year the parents of 41 boys reported that their children had never attended camp. The Bowling Green Neighborhood House, the Trinity Church Guild, and St. Peter's Church were the chief sources through which boys were sent to camp.

It is noteworthy that, whereas the number of country visits increased during the depression, day outings sharply decreased. Apparently it was easier for parents to send their children to relatives in the country than it was for them to have the time or inclination to take them out on day trips.

### Parental Supervision

On Parnell Street, as in other blocks, the extent of supervision varied with the age of the boys, most supervision being over the very young and least supervision over the grown boys. (See Table 28, "Parental Supervision Over Hours and Activities of Parnell Street Boys, 1932.") Among 120 boys on whom data were compiled, 50 parents claimed supervision over both hours and activities. Of these, all but two boys were below the age of 14 years, and 30 of the group had no supervision whatsoever. Although the majority of these latter boys were 15 years and over, surprisingly, 7 without supervision were below the age of 14, and of the 7, 4 were below the age of 9. Twenty-seven boys

were not supervised in their activities, but had to come home at reasonable hours. Data were not obtainable on 7 other boys.

TABLE 28

PARENTAL SUPERVISION OVER HOURS AND ACTIVITIES OF PARNELL STREET BOYS, 1932

	Totals	Under 6	6-9	10-14	15-17	18 Plus
<i>Type of Supervision</i>						
Supervision over hours only..	27	1	6	11	8	1
Supervision over activities only	6	1	1	4	..	..
Over both .....	50	18	17	13	2	..
No supervision .....	30	..	4	3	6	17
Not reported, for hours .....	6	1	1	1	3	..
Not reported, for activities ...	7	1	1	1	3	1

The statistics indicated that 44% of the boys were nominally supervised with regard to hours and activities, and 26% of the boys were not supervised at all. These figures, however, did not give a true picture of the degree of supervision because, as indicated in another section, in most families even that supervision which was given was of a very perfunctory nature because of the preoccupation of both parents with work. The limited nature of parental supervision in 1932 was no different from what it was in 1926, when it was stated that, "Mothers, in spite of inability to supervise boys during working hours, have some ideas of directing their behavior and of advising them in a limited way. Accepting the general standard of the neighborhood, where boys live on the street, to have the boys come home by 9 or 10 o'clock was agreeable to many parents. Living in such crowded quarters as they do, it is almost imperative for the boy to remain out of the house until bed time."

A majority of the children during the summer months, when the 1932 records were recorded, were required to be in the house at a fairly reasonable hour. Among 42 children on whom these data were available, 11 had to be in by 8:00 o'clock, and 24 by 9:00 o'clock. A considerable proportion, however, were allowed to remain up until very late hours. Separation of 42 cases into boys from families of normal background and boys from families in which there was either crime, discord, or a broken home dis-

closed a tendency for the boys from abnormal homes to remain out much later than those from normal homes. Thus, 8 of the 9 boys from abnormal homes were allowed out until 10:00 P.M., or even later. The sampling, however, was too small to be completely relied upon.

A comparison of the extent of supervision among normal families and among families showing crime and discord, leaves no doubt that in the normal families supervision was a more positive factor than among the abnormal group. Among the total of 57 families 23, or 40%, were classified as problem families. Only 10 of 50, or 20% of the boys supervised both as to hours and activities, were from abnormal families, whereas of 30 boys who were completely unsupervised, 17, or 56%, were from problem families.

Only a few parents among the normal or the abnormal group of families were able to take constructive measures of supervision, such as directly supervising the children's play or participating in their play with them. In only three instances among the 23 abnormal families did the parents undertake constant supervision, and this was entirely among children below the age of eight years. In seven out of thirty-four normal families the parents undertook direct supervision. The majority of the families gave their children full run of the streets to play as they pleased, just so long as they turned up at a fixed hour.

As to older boys, the general statement of the parents was, "They are old enough to take care of themselves." The mothers of younger children usually said, "The children play by themselves on the street."

As might have been expected in a block where general supervision was lax and where both parents were employed a great part of the time, disciplinary measures were hardly in evidence. In strong contrast to several of the Italian blocks where there were marked evidences of strong parental discipline, there were very few cases in this block where either mothers or fathers were spoken of as being strict or of utilizing punishment of any sort to enforce discipline, or even of using constructive measures of disciplinary control. The behavior of the children was in general indicative of this lack of control. The older boys seemed

indifferent, and the younger children, particularly those of recently immigrated parents, were insolent and displayed temper tantrums. There was much rough talking between children and parents and between brothers and sisters. In very few families were there any evidences of breeding and considerateness in behavior. In some families no amount of moral preaching to the children could ever overcome parental bad example. Fathers who drank, beat their wives and were abusive to the children were recorded in five instances, and in many other cases parental discord of a lesser degree was in evidence.

Evidently life on this and similar blocks where there was terrific crowding was full of hazards that not even conscientious supervision could overcome. Only by moving from the neighborhood could the condition in most instances be remedied.

In certain instances mothers were blind to the needs of supervision, as where in one case, a mother stated that she did not find it necessary to supervise her two sons, ages 18 and 20, as both were good and able to take care of themselves. In this instance the head worker of the Bowling Green Neighborhood House reported with regard to the younger boy, aged 16, that:

He is the youngest in a family of five boys. At 10, he worked at a news stand, and still does. Like his brother, he is a heavy drinker, and gets drunk every Saturday night. He hangs out in a speakeasy on the street. He is a member of the Rover A. C., and would like to be a gangster if he could. He never mixed much with the boys in Bowling Green, but hung out with newsboys and attended big crap games in backyards on Sunday morning.

Among the older boys, non-supervision reached such a point that it might be said that a large proportion of the older boys merely used their homes as a place to sleep. In one extreme instance a Syrian boy of twenty-one, a former delinquent, came home with a Slavic girl and a marriage license, introduced her as his sweetheart and asked his mother to accompany them to church for a wedding. This mother had never seen the girl before and had never known that the boy was keeping company with her, although the boy claimed subsequently that he

had known the girl for three or four years and had kept steady company with her.

### Behavior Disorders and Juvenile Delinquency

The earlier characterization of the Parnell Street block as one of excessive adult criminality holds equally true when applied to youths below the age of twenty-one. Although a direct comparison was not available for both survey years, comparable data indicated no major change in the official delinquency status between the two years. A considerable proportion of the boys bore clear evidences of the results of disorganized and un-supervised family life. Gangs, unsupervised clubs tending toward criminal patterns, habitual gambling, individual and group thefts, excessive intoxication, street fights between Irish and Syrian toughs, and wayward behavior of unsupervised younger boys were reported to field investigators.

The most illuminating facts concerning juvenile delinquency came from the boys themselves. The parents were reticent, or ignorant, and concealed the more serious delinquencies of their children. (Table 29, Parent Ratings of Boys' Behavior, Parnell Street.) Reports by parents in 1932 on eighty-four boys out of

TABLE 29  
PARENT RATINGS OF BOYS' BEHAVIOR, PARNELL STREET, 1932

Type of Behavior	Totals	Ages				
		Under 6	6-9	10-14	15-17	18-20
<i>Adjusted Group:</i>						
Well-behaved . . . . .	38	2	6	11	10	9
Usually well-behaved	8	2	1	4	1	..
Totals . . . . .	46	4	7	15	11	9
<i>Maladjusted Group:</i>						
Negativistic . . . . .	4	2	2	..	..	..
Wilfully disobedient..	7	1	3	2	..	1
Truant . . . . .	3	..	1	1	..	1
Delinquent . . . . .	4	..	1	1	..	2
Totals . . . . .	18	3	7	4	0	4
Not reported . . . . .	20	3	5	5	3	4

one hundred and seventeen on the block would lead to the belief that the majority were quiet, home-loving boys. Only eighteen were adversely described, four young children below the age of nine being described as negativistic; seven were reported as willful or disobedient, three as truant, and four as overtly delinquent. Contrary reports on eight other boys, described by parents as well-behaved, were received from neighbors and community workers.

Official juvenile delinquency was reported in three cases in 1926 and in four cases in 1932. A check in 1932 of the Magistrate's Court dockets for 1926, in the courts of lower Manhattan, disclosed eleven youths over sixteen and under twenty-one years who were arraigned from the block, or who gave addresses on the block.

In 1926 the boys nonchalantly admitted to playing truant frequently without being caught or punished.

An analysis of the factors contributing to delinquency may be made from two relatively different standpoints; from case studies of individual delinquents or from a study of environmental conditions affecting delinquency. The 1926 surveyors concentrated on the case method and cited cases that demonstrated clearly the multiple causation of delinquency. In every case a situational pattern existed which increased the chances of an ultimate delinquent act.

The association between delinquency and the lack of supervision occasioned by the employment of mothers was indicated in several cases reported in the earlier survey year. This circumstance, however, was sometimes combined with others equally contributory to delinquency. In some cases the motivation for delinquency lay rooted, not in a lack of supervision, but in unintelligent parental supervision. Thus in one case a fifteen year old boy was caught in a gang theft in order to obtain money for the movies. Inquiry disclosed that the boy lived under the most drab of home conditions, with parents hardened and embittered by their own hardships. The father, a longshoreman and the mother, a cleaning woman, did not understand why children needed pleasure. Once an aunt invited the boy to visit her farm in Pennsylvania during the summer, but the father



refused to permit a vacation, because he himself never had one. The boy was required to work after school and on Saturdays as a newsboy, and was also required to give the money to his father. The boy formerly belonged to Bowling Green House, but quit for an unknown reason. He was invited by Bowling Green to attend camp, but his father refused to let him go, although his mother was willing.

A description of the delinquency activities of Parnell Street boys involves a cross-section of their daily lives. Delinquency was no mere abnormality of an infrequent child or two, but represented almost a normal phase of the boys' lives. The mores of that little community were in so many ways different from those of families of a more secure social and economic status, that the behavior of the child might be regarded as having been a reflection of the mores of the adult group. The parents, or at least a large proportion of them drank, fought, gambled, and ran about with women other than their wives. It was hardly surprising, therefore, to find identical behavior patterns, to which may be added theft, among the boys. A far greater number of children stole than did their parents; which, of course, is understandable, as the parents had an income, where the children had none, or an inadequate one.

There was considerable sexual activity. The more sophisticated girls came in contact with sailors in the water-front park just below the block; other girls went with boys from the block to the Rovers A. C., an independent social club of ill repute. Developmental sexual experiences among the boys involved such activities as masturbation orgies among the younger boy gangs down on the docks. Heterosexual adjustment was complicated by homosexuality among Syrian lodgers and little Syrian boys.

Backyards were the scenes of well-attended crap games on Sunday mornings, although gambling was otherwise not very frequent, probably owing to a lack of ready money. Many of the older boys drank to excess and frequently became drunk at parties. Vicious behavior of an assaultive character was infrequent. It seemed that boys on this block either got along with each other or avoided one another, but there were no serious

gang antagonisms, no feuds, nor any well-defined delinquent gangs.

Although court records indicated considerable delinquency and common gossip yielded much with regard to delinquent activities, family inquiries did not develop adequate pictures of delinquent behavior for, as already indicated, the parents were very much on the defensive in discussing the delinquencies of their children. In several aggravated cases, however, the concern of the parents burst the bonds of their restraint, and resulted in a picture of the delinquency situation.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### PALM STREET—1926

**P**ALM STREET, in contrast with the other blocks in this survey is set, not in a last-century slum, but in a recently deteriorated residential section of southwestern Harlem, not far from Central Park. Palm Street, in 1926, was a prosperous, well cared-for row of modern "new law" apartment houses, considerably superior in construction to the usual Harlem type of housing. The ornateness of architecture, the generous use of cut limestone, the presence of grilled doors, fancy iron work, iron lanterns and much plate glass, all suggested the comfort and security of a middle-class existence.

In 1926, Palm Street consisted of comfortably furnished apartments equipped with modern conveniences. In that year the only unattractive and possibly unhealthful apartments were basement flats occupied by the families of building superintendents.

But in 1926 the block had already begun its descent in economic status. Owners were failing to keep up their standards; the old-established families were rapidly moving out, and Spanish and Porto Rican families with many lodgers were moving in. By 1931 the block had deteriorated considerably. The streets were less clean; hallways and stairs were shabby, and entrances were spoiled by the chalk and crayon markings of little boys and girls. By that year many of the large seven-room apartments had been cut into smaller three and four room apartments. Every house had a "To Let" and "Furnished Room" sign.

Small business had crept into private apartments where families combined business with living quarters in an attempt to eke out an existence. Plastered on every front parlor on the street level were the signs of tailor shops, laundries, musicians' studios, etc.

## Realty History of Palm Street

In 1921, Palm street was occupied almost entirely by a well-off class of Jewish businessmen. During the housing scarcity of 1921-6, during which period there was practically no new housing construction in Greater New York, the wealthy tenants of this block remained; but as soon as new construction began in the Bronx, they began to move out and a somewhat poorer class of Jews moved in.

Rental values in 1925 were 40% to 45% higher than in 1931. Seven room apartments which rented at \$110.00 to \$120.00 per month in 1925, had a current rental average of \$65.00 in 1931.

In 1926 a Jewish landlord who had been having difficulties with his tenants is said to have leased an apartment to a Porto Rican family. He then leased the entire house to a Negro who filled it with Negro families. From that time on, rental values on the block began to drop.

In 1928 a realty syndicate began purchasing parcels of improved property on and adjacent to Palm Street in order to convert the area into a new section similar to the Plaza at 59th Street and Fifth Avenue. The syndicate operated contrary to the advice of conservative realtors and in 1931, after purchasing property at boom prices, far above its earning value, it suddenly went bankrupt, and all properties reverted to their original owners.

Property was returned in very poor condition. The syndicate proved to be a very unreasonable landlord, failed to make repairs, lowered rentals, and left property untenanted. During 1931 the old owners, in an effort to re-rent their properties, renovated and redecored them.

Neighborhood real estate men in 1931 believed that no important changes would take place for many years to come, and that the block would not disintegrate further because practically every house had been foreclosed during the depression and the present owners could afford to keep houses in repair since they had only a small equity tied up in them.

## Composition of Population

Palm Street, in 1926, had 597 families and household groups, of whom 178 were visited in a search for families with boys within the age group concerned in this study. Of these 178 households, 65 consisted of families with 111 boys between the ages of 2 and 21 years. The great majority of the boys were under 16; only 21 of 111 were between 16 and 21 years.<sup>1</sup> In these families there were 40 girls, of whom 34 were below the age of 16.

Homes held others besides parents and children, for among 65 families in which there were 119 parents, there were 49 lodgers, 1 boarder and 25 other persons, including relatives. In two instances apartments were shared with another family and in one case the entire family lived in one room in a boarding house.

The presence of boarders, lodgers and others did not appear to be a destructive influence in family life. This may have been because the great majority of these families were unbroken, and had adequate supervision; or because there were fairly adequate housing facilities, guaranteeing greater privacy to individuals and less interference with normal family life than in other blocks studied.

Lodgers, boarders and others were most frequently found in Spanish-American and Negro families. Among the 64 adults in the Spanish-American group, there were 23 parents, 31 lodgers, 1 boarder and 9 others. Two families shared their apartment with other families. In the Jewish families, there were neither lodgers nor boarders.

In 1926, 27 countries were represented as birthplaces of parents; 12 parents (8 white and 4 negro) were American-born; one mother was Nova Scotian; 26 parents were born in Spanish-American areas, such as Porto Rico, Cuba, Panama, and the British West Indies (of these 6 were negroes from the British West Indies and the rest were Spanish-American whites). Three of the Spanish-American white parents hailed from Colombia, South America. Most parents were European, 81 having been

<sup>1</sup>The age groupings of boys were; under 4 years, 12; 4-5 years, 14; 6-9 years, 25; 10-14 years, 32; 15-17 years, 14; 18 years and over, 14.

born in 13 European and Near East countries, 7 in England, 2 in France, 5 in Germany, 6 in Greece, 2 in Hungary, 8 in Austria, 34 in Russia, 4 in Spain, 7 in Poland, 2 in Ireland, 2 in Armenia, and one each in Smyrna and Czecho-Slovakia.

Among this group, 44 were Jewish parents, most of them born in Russia. The remainder were Catholics and Protestants. Thus the dominant cultures of the block sampling were Jewish, Western European white, Spanish-American, and Negro, there being 15 Spanish-American families, 6 Negro families, 21 white European Protestant-Catholic families, and 27 Jewish families.

Whereas most of the parents were born outside of the United States, most of the children were American-born. Of 111 boys, 81 were born in the U. S. A., one in Canada, 20 in Central American countries (5 in Cuba, 12 in Porto Rico, and 3 in the British West Indies), one in Colombia, South America; 6 in European countries (2 in Russia, 2 in Germany, 1 in England, 1 in France). In two cases the birthplace was not given.

An analysis of the boy population by nationalities disclosed that 39 of 41 boys of Jewish parentage were born in the United States. Among the 28 boys of Protestant and Catholic European parentage, 23 were born in this country. Eight of 11 negro boys and 8 of 28 boys of Spanish-American parentage were born in the United States. Of the three boys of native North American parentage, two came from parents born in the United States and one from Canadian parents.

Thus the majority of Jewish, Protestant and Catholic European, and Negro boys were American born and possessed an American background. Most of the Spanish-American boys, however, were born in Porto Rico and Cuba, and had a Spanish-American background. The small proportion of American-born boys among the Spanish-American group was, of course, due to the recency of the Spanish-American immigration.

### Population Changes

In 1926 the Palm Street block, to judge from the sampling, was predominantly Jewish and Spanish-American, although there was a sprinkling of other nationalities, including a small group of

native American whites, a handful of North Europeans, English, Irish, German and Austrian families; another handful of Slavic and Russian families, a French family, and several Near Eastern Greeks, Armenians and Turks.

The two dominant racial groups were from a sociological standpoint, of most interest, because they came into conflict. The Jews had been for many years the predominant nationality in this block, as well as in the entire neighborhood. At the time of the 1926 survey this block, in common with many others in the vicinity, was undergoing a process of unusually rapid transition, due to a great influx of Spanish-American families from Cuba, Porto Rico and the South American countries, a migration which had begun during the World War.

The Jewish population resented the newcomers but the prejudice and mistrust was not based upon any specific recognition of difference, for both the Jewish and Spanish-American populations were somewhat heterogeneous. While, among the Jews, those of Russian birth predominated, there were also Jews from Austria, Poland and England. The Spanish-Americans were markedly heterogeneous, consisting of true Spaniards, Cubans, Porto Ricans, British West Indians and South Americans, but all spoke an alien tongue, had somewhat the same dark skin, and were all collectively referred to among the Jewish families as the "half breeds." The Spanish-American families drew upon themselves the dislike and distrust of the Jewish community because of the marked difference in their customs and social and economic status. Where the residents of the block had been relatively prosperous Jewish middle-class families occupying large, comfortable apartments, the incoming Spanish-Americans were poor, and, in order to pay the high rents, often combined households with relatives, or took in lodgers. To the Jewish residents, this indicated a very low standard of living, and even suggested immorality. Tales were still current in 1932 of the primitive means with which Spanish-Americans partitioned off living quarters to accommodate several families. In many cases in a single room two couples slept, divided by a suspended sheet.

These conditions led to a rapid evacuation of the block by Jewish families which, in 1926, was in full swing. Those who

could afford to move did so, while the others spoke regretfully of their ill-luck, especially where the Spanish-Americans had moved into the same apartment building.

The withdrawal, while peaceable on this block, was not peaceable in other portions of the neighborhood, and conflicts raged for several years between Jews and Spanish-Americans, particularly on poorer blocks of low economic status, to the eastward, toward Fifth and Madison Avenues. These conflicts were engaged in more by adolescent and young adult groups than by grown residents. In many instances conflicts arose over the easy attitude of the Spanish-American youth toward Jewish girls. The Spanish-American boy, accustomed to the strict chaperonage of the Latin girl, was surprised to see so many American girls walking the streets unescorted. Following the tradition of his home country, he took it for granted that girls who walked the streets unescorted were fair game for sexual advances. Because of the language difference between the two races, it took the Spanish-American boy a long while to discover his error. The newspapers during that period bore vivid testimony to the sharpness of the racial conflict.

Not all of the conflict was between Jews and Spanish-Americans, however; the latter had more subtle distinctions among themselves. The newcomers included families of varying degrees of cultural standards, and those with higher standards invariably drew away from the others and looked down upon them. The Spanish who regarded themselves as of pure Castilian blood looked down upon the common run of Porto Ricans, whom they considered "dirty." Religion, through the churches, was the only interest that tended to weld the various Spanish-American groups together.

Contrary to the expressions of race conflict between Jews and Spanish-Americans, no such conflict was evidenced in the relations between Spanish-Americans and the families of the janitorial group on the block. The case records of twenty families whose parents were foreign born Catholics and Protestants disclosed only a single instance of race prejudice, on the part of a South American Spanish mother.

This latter almost complete absence of racial feeling may have



resulted from several causes: First, the majority of the janitorial group were of low social and economic status and had very little feeling of racial superiority. Also, they represented diverse nationalities, none of which was present on the block in sufficient numbers to develop a nationality prejudice arising out of block contacts.<sup>2</sup>

Among six Negro families race feeling was expressed by only one educated Negro mother who accepted submissively the discrimination against her race. Only four of fifteen Porto Rican families expressed prejudice, but all indicated their own superiority over either Spanish-speaking Negroes from Porto Rico, or over American Negroes.

Nine of twenty-seven Jewish mothers expressed racial attitudes which stressed the lack of culture of the incoming Negroes and Porto Ricans. Thus the proportion of persons expressing open prejudice was a minority. One hardly knows whether to accept this as representing the true measure of prejudice and to dwell on the importance of minority group opinions, or whether to regard expressed prejudices as representing only a fraction of community attitudes. It becomes a fascinating, if difficult, problem to determine how much overt expression of public opinion is necessary to move a community group to physical aggression against another group. If our sampling is an index, then it would seem that openly expressed race prejudice by less than 25% of the adult population would be sufficient to lead to sharp conflict in a community.

Those who objected to continued residence on the block, regardless of nationality, stressed the roughness and lack of culture of the majority of the residents. Seven Jewish mothers and children complained of the roughness in manner and speech of the incoming families. There is enough in this complaint of the roughness of the incoming population to make it appear that the

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<sup>2</sup> An interesting sidelight upon the motivations behind race prejudice is seen in the fact that among all the families who expressed race attitudes, only one took a submissive attitude. The others were all dominant, and expressed their superiority over another race whose presence offended them. Thus, the Jewish families felt superior to the Negroes and Spanish; the Spanish families felt superior to the Porto Ricans of mixed white and negro blood, and to the Spanish and American Negroes.

conflict here was not merely one between two different cultures, but between a higher expression of one culture and an inferior expression of another culture; that is, it seems fairly evident that the new immigration represented a socially and culturally inferior group, inferior not only to the block group with whom they were in conflict, but inferior as representatives of their own culture. From this standpoint we may regard the block as in transition from a middle-class neighborhood to a slum. The number of arrests for prostitution and gambling among persons who were not members of families with children, adds to the picture of a neighborhood in transition, in which the mores are not those of stable family groups.

In this connection, an educated Negro woman said: "Although colored people live in this building, I question their habits. Indications are suggestive of undesirable people. All-night parties until seven in the morning do not seem suggestive of busy working people."

The unwillingness of the Jewish parents to associate with the incoming Negroes and Porto Ricans was reflected in the attitude and spirit of most of the Jewish boys. Although the boys were thrown together on the street and in school, the new residents were not welcomed into the Jewish homes.

Because of racial discrimination, the neighborhood life and his participation in wholesome recreation, either informal or organized, of the boy newly arrived on the block, was made difficult. Often, on this account, he was without normal friendships or associations. For these reasons, many of the new boys were inclined to seek friends or interests outside of the neighborhood. However, as the newer races formed their own colonies within the apartment building, they created their own neighborhood life and interests.

### Housing

The apartments were equipped with modern facilities, including steam heat, bath and toilet, and electricity. Hot water, was of course, included in the service.

The rentals in 1926 ranged from \$40.00 to \$150.00 per month. The five families who paid from \$120.00 to \$150.00 rent included

those families of means who were planning to buy their own homes in other sections, and a Porto Rican family which maintained lodgers. The largest number of families, 31 out of 38, paid from \$40.00 to \$79.00 a month. Nine families received free rent in exchange for services. Only one family owned a building and derived income therefrom.

Many mothers thought the rents were high for their incomes, but they were willing to make sacrifices so that their children might live well. In many instances the maintenance of lodgers was one of the sacrifices.

An examination of rentals paid by a sampling of families on the block disclosed no important variations among different nationalities. However, of those engaged in janitorial work who occupied poorer quarters given free for services, five families were European, three Negro, one Jewish, and one Spanish American.

### Language and Literacy

Except for one mother, all parents had some education, the range extending from a few years in the grades to University training. The majority of parents read more than one language,<sup>3</sup> and, in homes where English was not spoken or read with ease, a foreign language newspaper supplied news of current American and local events.

Most parents in 1926 spoke English at home; in only 12 of 61 homes was a foreign language spoken.<sup>4</sup> Among 127 fathers and

<sup>3</sup>The language usually read was English, reported by 45 fathers and 38 mothers as their sole reading language. Five fathers and three mothers reported reading English and two foreign languages. Four fathers and three reported reading a foreign language fluently and English poorly; 2 fathers and 11 mothers reported reading only a foreign language. Six fathers and two mothers did not report. None of those reporting admitted illiteracy. It is to be noted that the fathers reported better capacity for English reading than did the mothers.

<sup>4</sup>The linguistic ability of parents, tabulated for all who reported was as follows: Fathers, English, 13; English and Spanish, 11; English and Yiddish, 13; English and German, 4; English and Greek, 4; English and Russian, 1; English and Slovak, 1; English, Russian and Yiddish, 2; English, Polish and Yiddish, 2; English, Polish, Russian and Yiddish, 1; English and French, 1; English, Russian and French, 1; English, Russian, Yiddish and French, 1; English, Spanish, Italian and French, 1; English, Syrian, Turkish and Greek, 1. Mothers, English, 14; English and Spanish, 9; English and Yiddish, 16; English

mothers 65 spoke English exclusively in the home, 14 spoke Spanish, 4 spoke Greek, 2 Russian and 2 French. The language spoken in the home by four parents was not recorded. The major language spoken in the home was, of course, not determinable from data on the linguistic accomplishments of the parents. The bulk of parents on this block spoke at least two languages; 27 parents spoke only English; 20 spoke English and Spanish, 28 English and Yiddish; the remainder spoke various other languages.

The fact that so many parents spoke English in the home indicates that, in this block, the process of Americanization had reached the point where the parents were probably in touch with the same culture as their children.

### Broken and Disorganized Homes

Three-fourths of the Palm Street households consisted of normal family groups with both parents living and at home. The other families had broken homes due to the absence of one or both parents. In four instances, children lived with friends or relatives, since the parents were either deceased or out of the country. Only the father was living in four instances; one lived with relatives; two maintained their own homes and one had married again. In four instances, there was only a mother living, and one of these was away. There was one step-mother.

Where homes were broken by the death of the mother, satisfactory arrangements had been made for the boys. However, economic pressure was a source of instability in three families where the father was dead. In two other families the mothers worked, but the boys assumed some of the economic responsibility, although striving for an education at the same time.

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and German, 3; English and Greek, 2; English and Slovak, 1; English and Russian, 1; English, Syrian and Greek, 1; English, Russian and French, 1; English, Russian and Yiddish, 1; English, Russian, Yiddish and Polish, 1; Spanish only, 3; Greek only, 1. Five fathers and six mothers did not report languages spoken. Fathers were slightly better linguists than mothers; thirteen fathers and eighteen mothers spoke one language, thirty-four fathers and thirty-two mothers spoke two languages, five fathers and three mothers spoke three languages, and four fathers and one mother spoke four languages.

Only four families showed obvious evidences of disharmony. Continual quarreling in two families ultimately resulted in legal separation. Friction and unhappiness existed in one family because of a step-mother, but the home became fairly harmonious after the removal of a sister adjudged delinquent because of incorrigible behavior.

In one family, resenting the strict orthodox customs of his Jewish father, a fifteen year old boy admitted that "My father and I quarrel all the time. I will not eat with my hat on in the house and I will not observe other Jewish customs. I don't believe in them. My father and I have fought over them for years, seriously too. But I don't care." His sister said, "It often created much unhappiness in the home."

### Occupations of Parents

The occupations of fathers ranged from work at unskilled labor to responsible positions in the business world. Few were found in similar lines of work. Twenty fathers worked as laborers, five as skilled mechanics, twelve as merchants, one as a waiter; eight worked in various commercial fields, as agents and salesmen. Eight parents were professionals, of whom one was a physician, four were musicians, and three were teachers. The occupations of two fathers were not recorded and two were unemployed.

Thus since of 58 fathers only 20 were laborers and the remainder were in the trades, commercial occupations, and professions, this block was of definitely better occupational status than the others in the study.

An analysis of occupations by nationality disclosed definite nationality differences. Of 22 Jewish fathers, only 4 were laborers, 13 were either independent merchants or employed in commercial lines, and four were in professions. One was unemployed.

Of the 17 European Catholic and Protestant fathers, 13 were either unskilled laborers or skilled mechanics. There was only one proprietor, one waiter, one commercial agent, and one professional man.

Of 14 Spanish-American fathers, 6 were either unskilled laborers or skilled mechanics, one was a proprietor, one was a teacher, and the remainder were in miscellaneous occupations.

Only 5 Negro fathers were tabulated, of whom two were laborers, two were professional men, and one was unemployed.

This comparison definitely shows that the Jewish residents were economically the most secure group on this block, the Spanish-Americans being second. The Protestant and Catholic Europeans were generally of inferior occupational status.

Many parents, particularly those in business for themselves, were reluctant to state their weekly earnings, but judging from their manner of living and the interests of their boys, they seemed to be in comfortable economic circumstances.<sup>5</sup> A few, who were preparing to move from the neighborhood and were living in the most expensive apartments, were undoubtedly prosperous and in a much higher economic class than was generally found in the block.

The salaries reported by 29 fathers ranged from \$20.00 to \$100.00 per week. Fifteen fathers earned between \$20.00 and \$39.00 per week. Ten fathers earned between \$40.00 and \$50.00, while three received between \$60.00 and \$70.00 per week. One father indicated a weekly salary of from \$80.00 to \$100.00.

Of the 13 parents conducting prosperous businesses of their own, only one expected his boy to follow the same line of work, and that choice was voluntary. Of the 7 professionals, one, a gifted musician, planned to have his 16 year old boy follow his profession.

The teachers' group planned to have their sons follow their profession or some other scholarly pursuit. Those in the less skilled occupations were less inclined to have their boys emulate them.

Unemployment in this block presented no acute problem, as only two fathers were out of work. As the mothers in these two families regularly supplemented earnings by doing janitor work, or keeping lodgers, no acute economic distress existed.

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<sup>5</sup> In approximately one-half of the instances the income could not be obtained, the amount given being only an approximation.

## Employment of Mothers

Twenty-two of sixty-one mothers, or slightly more than one-third, were commercially employed in 1926, fourteen doing work in the home and eight outside of the home. Six of the mothers who worked in the home did needle work, one kept lodgers and seven were janitresses. Among mothers who worked outside of the home, two were domestics, three were clothing workers, one worked in a motion picture theatre, and two were teachers. Their weekly earnings was said to range from \$5.00 to \$75.00, but the inadequacy of the data prevented any further analysis of these figures.

Seven mothers who took in lodgers, and did sewing in addition, were not tabulated as doing both, but the income derived from the lodgers was included in the total income of the family. Three mothers did embroidery work or made lampshades at home, and also kept lodgers.

One Spanish mother was so burdened with the work involved in keeping four lodgers and embroidering in between times, that her four boys had little of her attention. The two oldest boys worked after school to help her and presented a very untidy and weary appearance. "I must work," said the mother, "but I do not seem to be able to manage two of my boys." Accustomed to a more rural life in Cuba, she seemed to have no realization that freedom from some of her work would give her time to look after the boys.

A Porto Rican mother and father with seven children, the eldest eleven years, who wished to "keep up appearances," as an asset in the father's work, lived in a large and rather expensively furnished apartment. To help the father, the mother maintained lodgers in addition to doing embroidery work at home. Filling the apartment to its capacity left only the luxurious living room as a place for the children to play.

"They ruin all the furniture. I have never had a day's rest since I had those kids," said the father. "I have already refurnished this room once this year. They will have to play outdoors." And he sent four of the seven out. There was apparently no place for the boys to play in the house, and the

constant "Look out for this or that!" must eventually have had an irritating effect upon an otherwise congenial home relationship.

One mother who conducted a sample dress shop in her apartment, had an attractively furnished home and was earning money, so that the "boys may live and dress as well as others with whom they associate." Their father's earnings were inadequate for that, and both parents desired to "live in a respectable neighborhood."

Hoping to become a sculptor, attending Art School three evenings, a mother worked as a machine operator to help herself and the father, a gifted writer. Plans for the care of their boy were adequately made with a relative during her absence. "She is gifted," said the father, "and my boy, though young, is interested too, so if she wishes to work, we want her to, provided it leads where she wishes to go."

The prospect of freeing the father from teaching so that he might embark upon a career of writing in which he showed signs of talent, was the reason one mother was teaching. As she and the father were away all day, a trustworthy servant was left in charge of the two school boys. "Their interest is entirely literary," said the mother, "and I am sure they are influenced by my work as well as their father's."

It was said by neighbors, several of them friends of the mother who was engaged in the movie business, "that she is using her six year old boy in pictures, and had done so for a long time."

All mothers working outside the home arranged for the care of their boys by relatives or friends, or by providing a maid. The older high school boys ate lunch at school and usually did not come home until late in the afternoon, when they took care of themselves.

The economic condition of these families could not be estimated, since about one-half of the families were unwilling to give this information.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> It is to be noted that an accurate income record is almost impossible in a social survey, as the families that are willing to discuss their income are usually of a low economic status and have kept no accounts of their irregular earnings, while families of bourgeois type, that have kept careful records of their earnings, are usually reluctant to discuss that which they consider a personal matter.



### The Role of Social Institutions in Family Life

The majority of Palm Street fathers and more than one-third of the mothers had community organization affiliations or interests in 1926. Among 56 fathers there were 49 organization interests, an average of slightly less than one organization interest per person, while of 57 mothers, 21 had 22 organization affiliations, or about one per person. Others of European non-Jewish birth were primarily concerned with their home life, for only one of the 15 revealed an outside organization interest.

Parents participated in nine types of organization:—neighborhood and community centers, churches, political clubs, fraternal associations, benefit societies, labor unions, social clubs, educational institutions, and unclassified groups. Church and benefit society memberships were the most frequent organization interests. There was only one member of a labor union and only one affiliation with an educational institution. It might be said, therefore, that the majority of the organization affiliations of these people represented a desire for social mingling and protection, rather than for new intellectual experience.

The greatest number of memberships, proportionately, were among Negroes and Jews, and although the samplings were small, distinct nationality preferences for different types of organization were noted. Thus, among 23 Jewish fathers and 35 Jewish mothers, not one had a formal religious affiliation, but 4 of 12 Spanish-American mothers, all of 5 Negro fathers and all of 4 Negro mothers had church affiliations. Jewish fathers, however, held 15 of the 23 benefit society memberships. The nationality samplings for the other organization groups were too small to be significant.

The greatest proportion of non-memberships was among Spanish-Americans, where 18 of 26 parents had no affiliations; 12 of 30 European parents and 15 of 48 Jewish parents had no affiliations, but each of the 9 Negro parents were church members.

To many families, their affiliations were the chief form of recreation. Many boys recalled pleasant summer picnics given

by lodges or societies and others referred to the regular monthly social gatherings given by "my father's lodge."

Groups of Spanish and Porto Rican families were members of a society whose chief purpose was the building of a Spanish Roman Catholic Church, in which language and religious instruction for boys as well as special recreational work for them was being considered. Many balls, parties and picnics were given to raise money for the church and the boys referred to these occasions as "sure having a good time."

Definite educational work for boys was carried on by the Jewish Workmen's Circle. Other organizations such as the Episcopal Church Mother's Club provided contact with Americans.

Many parents referred to "occasionally attending a Parent Teacher's Association Meeting," but only four were actual members, of whom two were a Negro father and mother, both teachers, who appreciated the educational value of this organization. However, because of the heavy demands of their own work, and also because few Negroes attended, they seldom went to meetings. They did, however, "recognize the connecting link with the teachers of their two boys," and regretted that they could not be more active in the association.

### Adult Anti-Social Behavior

An examination of the dockets of the local Magistrate's Courts disclosed fifty-six court arraignments in this block during 1926 and 1927—forty among native born whites, twelve among foreign born whites and four among Negroes.

A comparison of the names of all persons reported by the police or recorded in the court dockets on criminal and lesser charges with the names of all families in the 1926 survey sampling, disclosed that not a single parent in the 1926 sampling was in either the police or court groups. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that Palm Street residents who came into conflict with the law were not the parents of growing boys and girls, nor members of the families of growing boys and girls. They were either drawn from families without children, from

families with children already grown, or from the mobile group of lodgers and other nonfamily groups on the block.

The bulk of the charges were for lesser misdemeanors. Eleven cases of prostitution,<sup>7</sup> ten affecting females and one a male pervert, and eleven instances of gambling, 7 of cards, 3 of crap, and one of common gambling, led to arrest. Of fourteen charges of disorderly conduct, thirteen were unspecified and one was for annoyance. There were 8 cases of theft, of which two were felonies, four violations of corporation ordinances, two cases of intoxication, and one felonious assault.

Prostitution, in two instances, led to the arrest of rooming house proprietors, and, in one instance, to the hospitalization of a venereally diseased girl. Although three girls were arrested on the charge of being wayward minors, it is questionable whether the Wayward Minor Law was properly invoked, as the ages given on the police blotter were above the age of minority.

Two boys and three girls between the ages of 16 and 21 were arraigned on various charges. One 18 year old white American girl was charged with degeneracy and given a suspended sentence. Two American Negro girls, sisters, 16 and 17 years old respectively, were charged with petty larceny and given a suspended sentence in the Women's Day Court. One white American boy, aged 20, paid a one dollar fine for shooting crap and a Porto Rican Negro boy of 20 was discharged on a similar charge.

The Court of Domestic Relations reported 5 non-support cases, in which the husband was the defendant and the wife the complainant. Two complainants were Negro women and three were white. All but one couple were below the age of 35. One wife apparently relented and never appeared to press the charge. Four court orders were entered for the weekly payment of support, the orders ranging from \$4.00 to \$15.00.

The police record of arrests and complaints for the years 1926 and 1927 covers only serious cases of homicide, robbery, assault and burglary, cases the dispositions of which were not reported on the dockets of the local Magistrate's Courts. There were five serious charges, of which three were felonious assaults.

In one instance a Porto Rican was charged with felonious

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<sup>7</sup> Corroborated by the records of the Committee of Fourteen.

assault, having struck an officer who was investigating a complaint in the dance hall located at one end of the block. In another case the white manager of the dance hall was stabbed in the chest during an altercation. The victim refused to help the authorities in any way, and the case had to be closed without discovering the assailant. The third instance was that of two Italians living in East Harlem, who were arrested on the complaint of a Chinese, the charge being assault with a knife. Both prisoners were discharged. In all three assault charges neither complainant nor defendant was a block resident, but all the offenses were committed in the notorious dance hall on the block.

In one case, a resident of the block was charged with burglary and receiving stolen goods, the complainant being a resident of the same building. One block resident complained that a man living in her house, assisted by three confederates who were block residents committed a burglary, obtaining entrance by means of pass keys. The block resident and two others were discharged, but the fourth defendant was committed to the penitentiary for unlawful entry.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE CHILD

#### Education

**I**N 1926 the educational ideal was very strong among Palm Street boys, and, except for a few of the poorer boys, the majority expected to complete high school, while many expected to complete college. This educational goal was shared by both parents and boys and some boys helped by working their way through school. Throughout the entire block not a single parent made the slightest criticism of a boy's attitude toward his studies.

Approximately two-thirds of the boys were in school, in classes ranging from kindergarten to college. Of the 111 boys in the study, 92 were under 16, and more than half were of school age. Two boys were in kindergarten, 48 went to elementary public school and one was in elementary parochial school; 3 boys attended junior high school. Of the 10 boys in high school, 3 were taking commercial courses and 7 were taking general courses. Among the latter, two were attending Townsend Harris, a high school which prepares boys for the College of the City of New York. Three of the four boys in evening high school were Porto Ricans and Spaniards who had completed one or two years of day high school in their own country, and were seeking to complete their courses here. One native American boy had been forced to leave day high school early, due to the unemployment of his father, a chauffeur.

Four boys were attending college, one at Columbia, one at Fordham, one at New York University Dental School, and one at New York University. Three of the four were receiving professional training, one in law, one in dentistry, and one in commercial subjects. The fourth was taking a liberal arts course preparatory to the teaching of languages.

A sixteen year old boy at Fordham College of Law, said of his school career: "My mother has been the influence in our family. Everything we boys are we owe to our mother. When we were little boys she decided that we three boys were to follow a profession, so she told my older brother he was to be a doctor, my other brother a dentist, and I a lawyer. No outside influences or suggestions helped us; it was she always."

The Columbia University boy, whose family was in comfortable circumstances, stated that his inspiration for attending college came from friends who were fellow members of the Monmouth Club, described elsewhere in the section on Recreation. The New York University boy, who was working toward a degree in Commercial Science, intended to enter the business world upon graduation. "I not only assist my father in conducting his real estate business, but I am a salesman for a business concern, touring the country in an automobile I purchased with my own earnings. I have worked my way entirely through high school as well. But it is too hard on a boy, and I do not want my young brother (now seven) to ever do it. We will help him, so life won't be so strenuous, and so there will be time for play. Of course I play. I go to parties in my friends' houses, but I haven't had as much fun as is good for a boy."

A comparison of secondary and collegiate education among the boys of school age in different racial groups showed only two of four white European boys were at the high school level; only two of eleven Spanish-American boys were at the high school level; all eleven negro boys were at the grammar school level; and eighteen of fifty Jewish boys were at the high school or collegiate level.

Of seventeen boys who had already completed their schooling, nine were elementary school graduates, two had completed continuation school, four were high school graduates, one was a high school graduate, and one had attended private school abroad. Those who had attended high school were confined to the Jewish group.

The future educational plans of the younger boys on the block, while perhaps reflecting the buoyant optimism of youth, showed nevertheless, a strong desire for higher education. Of twenty-

one boys who expressed ambitions for future education, ten wished to attend high school; college attracted five, three aspired to university training, and three expressed specific professional interests, one wishing to become a musician, one a civil engineer and one a physician. These ambitions were mainly in the Jewish group.

The Jewish group thus possessed distinct educational advantages over the other groups on the block, for the boys in school had achieved higher educational standing, those out of school had done likewise, and those in school had much higher educational ambitions than did the Negro, Spanish-American boys, or white boys of European birth.

Ambitions of unusual sorts and very unexpected directions were uncovered in this block. A young Negro whose father was a practically illiterate laborer, with inadequate income, was expecting to study at night high school, largely through his father's ambition that he should have at least that much education. Two boys, one Russian and another German, wished to become professional athletes, one being a member of the Metropolitan Association Athletic Union, and the other a frequenter of a basement on 119th Street, where he obtained gymnastic training. This boy said: "I play on semi-professional base-ball teams whenever I get a chance, and now I am going in for boxing. When I am twenty or twenty-six I will become a professional base-ball player. My mother won't mind when she sees all the money I bring home."

A Greek boy of artistic leanings had the ambition of becoming an architect.

A young Negro boy, both of whose parents were teachers, had the ambition of attending Harvard University, of which his father was an alumnus.

### Religious Instruction

Formal religious instruction of boys was not extensive. Roman Catholic instruction was given in eleven instances, and instruction in the Hebrew faith in eighteen instances. Of these twenty-nine boys, twenty-four were native Americans and only four

were Spanish-Americans. No Negro boys received formal religious instruction. Among Jewish boys, religious instruction was primarily in preparation for confirmation. Their families had traveled away from orthodoxy, and whereas on a customary basis so many insisted that their children be "Bar Mitzvah," they themselves, generally speaking, did not attend synagogue save on religious holidays. Only six Jewish fathers and mothers and three older boys attended synagogue regularly. Most of the Spanish and Porto Ricans, who were Roman Catholics, had limited church contacts because of the distance from the nearest Roman Catholic Church whose congregation was Spanish. They intended to send their boys to their own Catholic church when it was completed. Among the Protestants, church attendance seemed to be a matter of free choice, some of the boys attending church "once in awhile, when they felt like it." There was, however, no iconoclastic attitude toward religion.

### Cultural Education

Musical training was the outstanding form of cultural education among boys on this block. Most of the boys, however, received no cultural education whatsoever. Ten boys studied music. One talented boy of sixteen had received musical training on the violin from childhood, and had received scholarships at the outstanding music conservatories in New York City. Another, an eleven year old boy, was studying the piano at an outstanding musical conservatory.

Nine Jewish boys were either receiving or had received instruction in the Hebrew language, but not for long periods, and few achieved real proficiency in reading or writing the language. Boys whose parents spoke Spanish were taught the language at home, but no formal instruction was given.

Many boys received cultural inspiration from a branch public library several blocks away, which was used by twenty boys, primarily between the ages of twelve and fourteen years. However, many of the boys visited the library only to obtain data for book reports required by school teachers. Not more than six boys on the entire block admitted any fondness for reading. "We are



really too busy," said one of them, "to do any reading. We don't have any time." Nevertheless, every boy who could read was daily seen poring over the tabloid papers with great enthusiasm. One boy was a member of a group under the guidance of a synagogue social center, which took weekly trips on Saturdays through the parks and in the country, studying the flowers and birds of the region.

### Health and Physical Handicaps

In the 1926 survey no special study was made of the problem of health and, since this was a social survey and not a clinical study, all that is known about the health of Palm Street boys in that year was gleaned from the family interviews, which disclosed few instances of ill-health.

With the exception of several children, all but one of whom were the children of janitorial workers, the boys appeared to be in excellent health. The only preventive health measure taken by parents was the granting of adequate time for outdoor recreation. As is characteristic of the middle-class, the majority of parents on this block consulted their private physicians and dentists "only when necessary," that is, after illness had struck. A very few families on the block consulted the free out-patient departments of free hospitals, such as Mount Sinai Hospital or St. Luke's Hospital.

Outstanding pathology was noted in four cases. In one instance a twelve year old boy who suffered from chorea was under a specialist's care, was carefully directed in his play and schooling by an intelligent mother, and spent prolonged rest periods in bed. A five year old Negro child was receiving hospital treatment for an eye ailment. A sixteen year old boy, handicapped by a severe speech defect, attended a speech class for treatment. The one case of a nervous disorder was apparently aggravated by friction between the boy and an orthodox Jewish father over religious observances. The boy's lack of orthodoxy had caused constant quarreling. According to members of the family the boy was a nervous wreck.

Every boy attending elementary school felt certain that he had

received yearly physical examinations. Boys in high school could recall no physical examinations, and claimed that they participated in gymnastics and athletic events without medical inspection.

### Employment And Vocational Guidance

Boys from this block accepted work with the same alacrity they accorded to recreation and education. They expected to be self-supporting and eagerly searched for work that promised opportunities and promotion. Few boys desired to follow their fathers' specific lines, and many were already in the business world or expected to enter it along lines other than that of their fathers.

Only eleven of twenty-eight boys above the age of fourteen were working, and some were newcomers from Porto Rico, or other places, taking temporary work of an unpromising kind, until they gained helpful connections in the city. Two other boys who normally worked were reported as unemployed. Only one boy was a laborer, working as a janitor's helper. One boy worked in a factory as a punch press operator, and one boy as a painter. Six boys were in clerical pursuits, and two were salesmen.

A comparison of working boys by nationality, shows that five of sixteen native American boys above the age of fifteen were employed in clerical and sales pursuits. There was only one Negro boy above the age of fifteen, and he was not employed. Four of the six Spanish-American boys over fifteen were employed, three as clerical workers and one as a factory worker. Two who normally worked were unemployed. Among five European boys above the age of fifteen, only two worked; one was a janitor's helper and the other was unemployed.

Six of ten boys interviewed believed that their work had a future; four could see no future in their work.

The earnings of these ten boys ranged from \$15.00 to \$50.00 a week. Five were earning from \$20.00 to \$29.00 a week. One salesman of sweaters was earning \$50.00 a week, including commissions. His younger brother earned \$25.00 a week while attending college. One boy was earning \$25.00 a week as a

secretary, with a chance for increase. Only the painter had irregular work, and was often unemployed for weeks at a time, but he did, however, average \$25.00 a week.

No boy in high school, college, or at work was conscious of any vocational advice given at school. On their own initiative these ten boys secured employment through newspapers, personal canvas, family, or friends. One boy, a sweater salesman, secured his job through the University. One boy working in the movie business, secured his job through a business letter which he had sent to all the large motion picture concerns in the city.

### Part Time Work

Sixteen boys were engaged in part-time work, after school, evenings, and on Saturdays. Two of these were twenty years old; eight were between the ages of fifteen and nineteen; five were between the ages of ten and fourteen, and one was below ten. Eight boys ran errands, two were musicians, one did janitor work for his mother, one assisted in his father's dry-goods store, one was a drug store helper, one boy worked as bookkeeper for his father, one was a helper in his uncle's pool room, one helped irregularly in his father's overall factory and regularly during summer vacation, one boy ran errands after school for his mother, an embroiderer, and two worked afternoons and evenings at unspecified jobs.

The sixteen year old boy employed as an errand boy in a nearby grocery store worked after school every day but Saturday until about 6:30 for \$3.00 a week.

The twelve year old errand boy for another nearby Spanish grocery store was employed daily from three to six o'clock, and all day Saturday. The fourteen year old boy, errand boy in a grocery store, was employed after school and on Saturday, and received \$7.00 a week. He was a second year student in high school, and as he was living with relatives, his own father being dead, he felt that he must earn in order to continue his education.

The fourteen and a half year old boy, doing errands for his uncle, who had an embroidery store, worked after school and on Saturdays, for which he received \$3.00 a week; the sixteen year

old boy, errand boy for a cigar store, was employed from three to six o'clock and a half a day on Saturday, receiving \$5.00 a week. He was putting himself through high school. A sixteen year old boy being tutored at home, as well as receiving special musical education, was substituting in a theatre orchestra. During the summer he played regularly in an orchestra as well as at concerts, given at fashionable resorts. A twenty year old boy mentioned before, had been earning his education for years by playing in bands and orchestras.

In a Greek family where the father was employed as a cook in a distant city, three boys, seven, twelve and sixteen years old, were working; two as errand boys in a drug store and tailor shop, while the third worked during the evening in his uncle's pool room. The twelve year old boy, an errand boy for a drug store, worked from seven to ten every night as well as from one to ten on Sunday. For these hours he received \$4.00 a week. The seven year old ran errands after school for a tailor and was paid for each errand. One sixteen year old high school boy went immediately after school to his father's dry-goods store, on the lower East Side, where he worked all evening and all day Sunday. He did not work on Saturday because of Sabbath. He was the one boy in this block who was following his father's business. Two boys sixteen and eighteen years, helped their mother with all the heavy work that falls to a janitor. They swept and cleaned the halls, and helped with the fires.

### Leisure Time

Marked nationality differences attended the various home recreational interests. The Spanish-American boys had proportionately the greater number of home interests, music being predominant. Among the Jewish boys, reading of library books was the most popular home diversion. Not a single Negro boy in 1926 was recorded as having home recreation.

Books were found in about six homes, and these were the homes of professional people. Games and interesting toys, however, were possessed by the majority of boys. Radios and musical instruments were present in the homes of 55 boys, although in

only 15 instances were musical instruments habitual sources of recreation among boys. The boy who owned a radio was popular among his friends and his house was constantly visited by both boys and adults.

### Outdoor Play

Except for very young boys and a few others absorbed in work or study, boys played either on the sidewalk, in the street, in parks, or on roofs. Handball, football, coasting and skating constituted the outdoor play of the older groups, and bicycle-riding, roller skating, sidewalk games, and toys were enjoyed by the younger boys.

Park and street play had their difficulties as well as pleasures. Because of the heavy traffic, parents would not allow young children to go to Central Park alone, although it was only several blocks away. Older boys often found it difficult to find a place to play on the athletic field, which was about ten blocks away, because it was usually crowded.

The same was true of the play space in the meadow. Some boys complained of being "chased off" play spaces because their noise disturbed sleeping babies, while others were chased from forbidden spots by the "cop." Many became discouraged and seldom went to the park, preferring to play on the street. Many boys liked Morningside Park because it was nearby, but they resented the fact that they could not play there. A few boys would "steal in and play till we see the cop; then we run." About ten younger boys, usually accompanied by adults, used the park regularly. Six of these were between two and five years old.

The difficulties surrounding the use of both parks increased the use of the street, unsafe as it was. A few mothers with younger children used the roofs as play spaces.

Of 87 boys who used Central Park, the largest number were between five and fourteen years old. This included young boys brought by parents or by older brothers and sisters, and those who went to the athletic field in the park to participate in competitive athletic games.

One boy reported that "us boys used to play up in the hill in

the park, but some rough boys, we think they came from 112th Street, were too bad—we think they tried to steal and we quit playing there. We like to play handball and we did in another place in the park, but we were sent away because the babies sleep there. Then we went into the field in the park and played ball and the cop sent us away and took our names and said we couldn't play there, but we could play on the sidewalk. But there was no fun there, so we don't go to the park much." "We like to play handball but there's no place to go," was an eleven year old boy's reaction. "If you go to Central Park ladies with baby carriages yell at you to get out of the way, or somebody else fusses so there is little place where we can go comfortably," was the feeling of an 18 year old boy who "likes sport." Another boy said: "We go to the park every day after school and on Saturday but we hustle so as to get a place there first in the meadow for all games. Big crowds come and you have to be smart to get a place."

One boy said his mother was afraid he would fall from the rocks, while another boy said his mother thought it was good to climb all around on the rocks in the park. "It's a good way to learn to be a sport, even if you do fall."

### Street Play

The street was a natural play space, and although every mother feared the dangers of traffic, boys of all ages constantly played there. Baseball was played on the street by children of all ages. On the whole, boys observed regulations and did not use a hard ball and bat. A high school boy, on arriving home, would take "just a few minutes for a game"; other boys who might later go to the park would practice for a short time on the street. Cooperative social games helped to make boys forget racial prejudices as foreign boys drifted unobtrusively into the games.

More than half of the boys said handball was their favorite sport but several boys were seen roller-skating every day, usually in the gutter, sometimes on the sidewalk, sometimes away from the block. A few boys skidded in and out among the various

ball games on bicycles. Other boys said they too owned bicycles and would use them later. During the season, the boys played football on the street.

Boys between five and ten years old often played checkers on the sidewalk. Younger boys played with toys, scooters, or kiddie cars on the sidewalk. Parents enjoyed watching the boys at play on the street, either coming out to "just look on" or watching from the windows.

Three families who lived five flights up from the street found it easier to have their six boys play on the roof than down on the street. An adult always accompanied the boys.

A much larger proportion of Spanish-American, European and Negro boys played outdoors than did Jewish boys. Thus, among six European boys, five played in Central Park and three in the street; among twenty Spanish-American boys, 15 played in the park and 15 played in the street; among 11 Negro boys, 9 played in the park and ten in the street. Among 73 boys of Jewish birth, only 49 played in the park and 43 in the street.

From only seven boys and four mothers came suggestions for the improvement of the recreational advantages of the block. Four boys and a mother recommended that Morningside Park be opened for play, as it had been prior to the erection of a fence around it. The principal complaint of both boys and mothers was the lack of play space for children. Several emphasized the need for supervision. One mother complained of the dangers of street play.

### Supervised Recreation

Indoor play among boys included memberships in such organizations as the Young Men's Christian Association, Young Men's Hebrew Association, school, church, athletic and national clubs, as well as the Boy Scouts and the Catholic Boys' Brigade.

Boys commenced their participation in organizations as young as eight years of age and continued until their late 'teens, when the competition of dances and parties reduced the number of memberships in formal groups. Many boys were members of several organizations and had gone from one to another according to their desire at different ages.

Illustrative of these was the following case of a young "joiner," who at fourteen, told of his "joining" experience from the age of eight.

"When I was nearly ten years old I heard of the Boys' Club, so I joined and used the gymnasium. I liked it but I left when I was twelve to join the Boy Scouts, which my friend joined. I still am a member and belong to the Kennedy Boy Scouts. I go off on hikes with them and go to the Camp, and I write letters to an English Boy Scout. I belong to the Spanish, Civics and Short Story Clubs at school (High) and I hope to make the Arista Club. That's the top notch Club of the school. Oh, yes, I belong to a club of our own. Some of us fellows organized an athletic club, we call ourselves the Monongotieta Club. We meet in the Democratic Club. One of the fellow's father is a member there, and we are going to 'chip in' and buy our own suits. I coast and skate in the winter and always find time to go to the movies once or twice a week, even though I am pretty busy. And I collect—I collect stamps and coins and sometimes swap with the fellows."

In 1926, organization memberships numbered 42, of which sixteen were in the ten to fourteen year group. There were 13 boy members from each of the two older age groups.

Few of the boys had intellectual interests outside of college and school. Two college boys were interested in fraternities. Only one boy, a Porto Rican, belonged to the Y. M. C. A. uptown and he joined it chiefly for "the opportunity of making social acquaintances."

Of the five boys, ages fourteen to eighteen, who were members of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, all save one used the gymnasium. One member said:

"Several years ago, boys living in the same block organized a club which we called the 'Monmouth Club.' After a short time we decided we would like to meet in the Y. M. H. A. on East 92nd Street, so we took our club there. We are all members of the organization, send our delegates to their council and meet there every Sunday. Our interests are both athletic and literary, but chiefly the latter. We have lectures often and I consider that most of the influence that made me ambitious came from



this Club. Even though I am now in college, as every member is, I attend my meetings regularly.”

“I never cared for the Y. M. H. A. It seemed to me a little like a charity,” came from a high school boy.

Some boys approved and some disapproved of the Boy Scouts, and but two boys, fourteen and fifteen years old, were members. At least six boys wished to become members, but could not afford the uniforms and could not see any way to earn the money. One Negro boy was too young. In the meantime they subscribed to the *Boy Scout Magazine*.

A sixteen year old Russian boy, very enterprising, said, “I don’t care for Boy Scouts, they don’t teach you anything you don’t know. Anybody with brains could learn what they teach.” A few others said: “It means military service if there is a war.”

A Spanish boy interviewed in the midst of his preparation of home work, took an active part in the conversation when it referred to recreation. “You bet I belong to the *Boy’s Brigade*. A friend of mine told me about it and I hustled right up and joined. We drill and everything.” His father, a teacher, protested against recreation in general. “Play is all right, but should be under supervision. I would abolish all athletics from the schools,” he announced, much to the amusement of his young son.

To the great disappointment of his family, one boy of nineteen, had joined the *Young People’s Socialist Club* and was interested in their educational program and athletic activities. “I enjoy it thoroughly and although I know my family disapproves, I believe in it,” he said. His seven year old brother, overhearing the conversation, said, “It teaches us to be kind and generous to other people.” An eighteen year old German boy, who read in the *Daily News* of the Metropolitan Association of Amateur Athletic Unions, paid \$1.00 for membership which entitled him to enter boxing matches and prize fighting with the “Golden Gloves.” “I like sports and could do other work if I wanted to, but I want to go in for sports. I am big and strong and should do well in them.”

Interest in the Public School Athletic Association was expressed by eight boy members. The younger boys stayed for

gym work after school while the older boys tried for school teams in baseball, football and track. Some were awarded medals for accomplishments in the latter. Field day activities were enthusiastically discussed, recalled and anticipated. Six boys had past memberships. One boy, not rugged appearing, thought "the school athletic association is too rough to join."

One boy found opportunity for artistic expression in the *Arts and Crafts Club* of the *Institutional Synagogue Community Center* a few blocks away. Another boy, ten years old, belonged to clubs at the *Temple Israel Community Center*, about ten blocks away. As a member of their summer school he was entitled to many privileges such as the use of the gymnasium, use of the workshop for children, nature walks on Saturdays, and carefully selected motion pictures. "I am glad to have him there off the street where he is learning all that is desirable," explained his mother. "I love my clubs," said the boy, "and I am glad when summer comes and I can go every day. We have just begun our nature walks and last week we went through the park to see the buds on the trees. We learn about flowers and birds, too."

One Armenian boy was a member of the *Calvary Jr. Club* of *Calvary Episcopal Church* on East 21st Street where he formerly lived. "I go three times a week, play in the gymnasium, and sometimes I go off on hikes with the boys. Before I belonged here, I belonged for one year to the *Boys Club, 10th Street*. I liked it just for the gymnasium, then I decided to go to the Church Club."

Three boys had dropped their membership in the *Harlem Hebrew Institute*. One explained: "Older boys do not enjoy going where the younger boys come. That is the only trouble with such places. We occasionally go back for parties, socials or sometimes just to see some of the teachers there we know and like." Two boys were members of *Heckscher Foundation*, several blocks away, and both used the gymnasium and swimming pool. One belonged to the *Gamma Delta Club*, a social club organized by a group of boys who lived in that vicinity, who later took it into the Foundation. One boy had left the Foundation because he thought it was too expensive.

Twelve boys belonged to nine varieties of *School Clubs*, in elementary, high and night schools. The two who belonged to the *Radio Club* "liked it, because we meet after school and learn to make radios." A member of the *Checker Club* expressed pleasure "in the competitive games we play regularly." The members of *French, Greek, Spanish, Mathematics* and *Short Story Clubs* were only mildly communicative about them.

*Self-Organized Clubs* and *Baseball Clubs* had five present members and seven past members. All clubs but one were athletic in purpose. The *Sporting Social Club* organized by Spaniards and Porto Ricans, provided recreation as well as a friendly group which gave assistance in time of need, and helped the unemployed to secure jobs. The club met uptown, some distance from the block. Two of the eighteen year old Spanish boys were members. *The Aces* was a handball club which played competitive games with other boys.

"A group of us boys," recalled a fifteen year old high school boy, "got together when I was twelve years old and organized a club we called '*The Lions*.' All the members were fellows in our block. One member was a boy who lived down on the corner whose mother was a janitor of that house. She let us have space in the backyard where we built the house for our meetings. We all chipped in and bought the lumber and then built the house together. As this janitor liked the boys she let us use the yard freely, and she gave some furniture for the inside of the house. We then organized into a baseball team and played all the blocks around here. We liked it and had lots of good fun. We bought all our own balls and mitts and kept up the club ourselves. On Sundays our captains used to go off on hikes with us in the country, sometimes to New Jersey, if we had the price. We busted up two years ago, the boys were moving away, and we raffled off our furniture and gave the lumber from the house to some of the young kids for their homes."

The response of different nationality groups to supervised recreation was an important index of the integration of these different nationality groups into the institutional life of the city. It is obvious that groups having no institutional affiliations may be regarded as groups with inadequate opportunities for social

expression. From this standpoint, it is significant to note that among the eleven Negro boys on the block, not a single one was affiliated either with supervised play groups, or with self-organized clubs. Among twenty white Spanish-American boys, all primarily children of recent immigrant families, only four were members of supervised recreational groups, and of these, two were in public schools. Among 73 native white American boys, mostly of Jewish birth, there were twenty-six supervised recreation memberships.

### Commercial Recreations

Except for a dance hall at one end of the block, which did not attract these boys, the remainder of the block was singularly free from the temptations of commercial recreations. Boys did leave the block for pleasure, however, and approximately one-half attended a motion picture theatre once or twice a week, on Fifth Avenue or on Seventh Avenue. This form of enjoyment was more popular among younger boys, about half of them being between ten and fourteen years old. Only two boys attended dance halls and one frequented a poolroom.

Commercial amusements attracted the different nationality groups equally, for approximately half of each group reported attendance at commercial amusements. Many mothers felt that movies had a bad effect upon the boys, and sought to regulate their attendance.

### Summer Recreation

Boys expressed keen interest in camps, although the expense seemed excessive for many families. Seven boys went to camp in 1924, while only 5 of 7 attended in 1925. At least ten boys expressed a desire to go in 1926. One definitely expected to be sent to a private camp as a special health measure. Two expected to go as usual to a Church camp and three others were hoping to be sent to a camp by a Jewish organization. Older boys said they had worked when they were young and did not have time for summer camp.

Not one Spanish-American boy attended camp in 1926, and

only two native white American boys attended. The previous summer three Spanish-American and six native American boys had gone to camp. In neither year did any Negro boys attend.

Country visits were a more usual experience for the boys than camping. At least thirty had been to some country resort, combining vacation with work, or simply vacationing with their families. At least ten boys went with their families to farms for one or two months.

Thirty-five boys definitely recalled day outings, including "lodge picnics" with their families, but more must have attended than were reported. There was a lack of summer recreational opportunities among the Spanish-American and Negro boys for only 3 of 20 Spanish-American boys and one of eleven Negro boys went on summer country visits, whereas 22 of 73 native white American boys made such visits. Nor was there compensation for the lack of summer trips by either day outings to beaches or by going swimming. Only 2 of 20 Spanish-American boys and 3 of 11 Negro boys were reported as going to beaches and parks, and only 3 Spanish-American boys and no Negro boys were reported as enjoying swimming. Among the white American boys, in addition to the 22 reports of country visits, 17 boys reported day outings to beaches and parks and two reported swimming at pools.

Swimming, judging from the boys' conversations, was greatly enjoyed, although only 10 recalled swimming at beaches or in the public pools of the *Y. M. C. A.* or other organizations. Those boys who went to summer camps and for country visits probably went bathing even if they had not learned to swim.

### Parental Supervision

One of the most pleasant impressions gained from this block was the happy relationship that existed between parents and boys, and the thoughtful care and supervision given the boys by parents. Supervision is a subtle thing to describe, as it involves an analysis of relationships of family life at a more intensive level than was possible in this study. As gained from observation and through conversation with parents and boys, supervision

appeared to include not only an affectionate interest in the doings of the boys, but advice about behavior, choice of friends, and amusements. A stated hour of homecoming was set for both afternoons and evenings.

A sixteen year old boy, a freshman in College, said, "My mother taught us about the choice of our friends and cautioned us about the kind of boys we should go with. We always brought our friends home and she always knew them and knew where we went. She soon told us if she didn't like our friends, and if they weren't the kind she thought desirable we had nothing more to do with them."

An intelligent mother of three boys, the oldest fifteen years and now in high school said, "All our children are watched by us. Our boy R. (the oldest) has to be in the house by eight o'clock every evening and up to that time he is right in the neighborhood. We always know where he goes. Every penny he has to spend, I find out where he gets it. If he goes to the movies, I ask him where he gets the money. We give him money, \$1.00 a week, but we want to know where the rest of it comes from. He brings his friends into the house and we know the families, so we know the type of boys he associates with. All the recent reports (murders and suicides) that we have read about in the daily papers, makes us especially careful of the boys. We do our best to teach them what is right."

One hundred and four of the boys were supervised. No information was obtained relative to the remaining seven. Eighty-five boys were supervised for hours and eighty were supervised for activities, but the tendency was to relinquish supervision as the boys became self-supporting or entered high school or college. Parents who were careful about hours were also careful about activities, but trusted the boys to make decisions about the latter. With the young boys, supervision meant "playing right in front of the door," "not going away to the park as it is too far," or "coming into the house directly after school and again by six o'clock."

As far as could be learned 14 boys were not supervised for hours and 19 were not supervised for activities. Among them

were those whose mothers worked, and some older boys who were living away from home.

### Juvenile Delinquency

Five boys living on the block of whom one was in the survey sampling, had been arraigned in the Children's Court as delinquents. All were white boys, between 11 and 15 years of age. In the survey group was a 12 year old American-born boy of Greek parentage, whose father was employed outside of the city, and whose mother was occupied with the rearing of two younger children.

CHAPTER XV  
PALM STREET—1931

Composition of Population

IN 1931, a complete block census was made; 592 apartments were visited, of which 72 were vacant. Of the occupied apartments, 427 families and household groups named their nationality and country of origin, but in 93 apartments, including one speakeasy, the investigators were refused information.

The results of this total census cannot be compared with any total population for 1926 since no complete block census was taken in the earlier year. By comparison of this latter census with the sampling studied in 1926, however, it would appear that a tremendous change in the nature of the block population had taken place during the intervening five years. Inasmuch as the statistics were corroborated by the statements of various block residents, they may be taken as substantially correct.

The comparison shows that whereas in 1926 the block was predominantly white European, in 1931 it was predominantly Negro. In the earlier year, in the block sampling, there were 27 Jewish families, 21 white European Protestant and Catholic families, 15 Spanish-American, and 6 Negro families. In 1931 there were in all 247 Negro families and household groups, 79 Spanish and Spanish-American families and household groups, and 49 English-speaking families, of whom 40 were American-born Gentiles and 9 were Jewish families of undetermined land of birth.

The nationality range, as determined by the country of birth of parents, was extremely broad, representing 36 countries in North America, Central and South America, Europe, and Asia. The great bulk of families, however, consisted of Negroes born in the United States and the British West Indies, of native American



whites, and of English-speaking whites of American citizenship, born in Porto Rico.

Among 31 families of white European stock from 11 European countries, the largest number came from Spain and had a culture, therefore, that was closely allied to that of the Porto Rican white families.

In the 1931 census, 177 of the families were without children. The greatest number of childless families and household groups consisted primarily of English-speaking Negroes, of whom there were 105 households. These groups appeared to have consisted of childless unions of elderly adults, of adults and boarders, or of non-family groups. One hundred and twenty-three of the families had only girl children, and in 122 of the 427 families on the block there were boys of survey age. The two groups on the block in which boys predominated were English-speaking Negroes and Spanish-speaking white families.

#### Population Composition of 1931 Survey Group

In 1931 the survey sampling consisted of 62 families, 37 Spanish and Spanish-American families, 23 Negro families, 1 native white American family, and 1 white African family. The majority of the parents were born in Central American countries.<sup>1</sup>

This sampling shows an unequal distribution by nationality, there having been a much larger proportion of white Spanish-speaking families and a much smaller proportion of Negro families in the survey sampling, as compared with the total block population.<sup>2</sup> The primary reason for this difference is that it was

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<sup>1</sup> The population in the families surveyed consisted of the following elements: Parents, 117; lodgers, 20; boarders, 24; other adults, 4; boys under 16, 70; girls under 16, 34; boys over 16, 22; girls over 16, 8. In four instances, the family shared its apartment with other family groups and in two instances the family occupied one furnished room in a boarding house. Most of the lodgers and boarders were found in the Spanish homes, 31 in 37 homes, as compared with 12 in 23 Negro homes.

<sup>2</sup> The following figures compare the samplings for the two survey years: In 1926, there were 597 occupied apartments, of which 178 were visited. Sixty-six of these were found to include boys of survey age. In 1931, there were 592 apartments, of which 520 were occupied. In 122 apartments, boys of survey age were found, and sixty-two of these families were included in the study.

very difficult to obtain the cooperation of Negro families. The Spanish-American families responded very well to the inquiries of native Spanish investigators but Negro families responded very poorly to the inquiries of American Negro investigators.

The 1931 sampling dealt with 60 white and 32 Negro boys. Of this group of 92 boys, 57 were born in the United States, 29 being Negro and 28 white. The remainder, 35 in number, were born in Central and South American countries, 32 being white and 3 Negro. The proportion of foreign-born children on this block was very high in comparison to the number in other blocks. It is to be noted that the majority of the Negro boys were native-born, whereas 40% of the Spanish boys were born outside of the United States.

The majority of children were below the age of 16, there being 70 boys and 34 girls below that age, and 22 boys and 8 girls above that age.<sup>3</sup> There was an important difference in the age levels of the Spanish-American and Negro boys. The majority of the Spanish boys were young children below the age of 10, whereas most of the Negroes were above that age. The boyhood activities of the block, therefore, should be considered in two different aspects: that of the Spanish-American boys of young age whose play activities would naturally be centered in the block itself, and that of a Negro boy population the majority of whom were of an age in which membership in institutional recreational groups would normally have commenced.

### Housing

In 1931, as in 1926, practically all of the apartments in this block had modern facilities, including steam heat, hot running water, private bath and toilet, and electric illumination. In 1931 a considerable number of apartments on this block had undergone renovation. In the survey sampling, all but 4 families had modern household conveniences.

Housing congestion rose from 1.09 in 1926 to 1.22 persons per room in 1931. (Table 30, Housing Congestion, Palm Street.)

<sup>3</sup> The age groupings among the boys were: under 4 years, 9; 4-5 years, 17; 6-9 years, 20; 10-14 years, 22; 15-17 years, 9; 18 years and over, 15.

TABLE 30  
HOUSING CONGESTION, PALM STREET—1926-1931

Total No. Families	Number in Family		Number of Rooms								Not Stated							
	1926	1931	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8								
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..					
6	1	2	..	..	..	3	2	..	2	1	..	..	..					
13	..	..	..	..	..	4	5	4	2	4	..	..	..					
19	..	..	..	1	..	4	2	10	11	5	..	..	..					
9	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	2	2	8	3	1	1					
7	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	4	3	1	..	..					
5	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	..	1	3	2	1					
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	1					
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..					
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..					
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..					
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..					
64	59	93	2	2	0	1	13	14	23	28	15	5	9	6	0	2	1	0

Housing congestion on this block, nevertheless, despite the presence of roomers and boarders, was not severe as compared with the condition on other blocks in the survey. There was a wide range in the size of families and of apartments. Some occupied as little as one room and others had as many as eight rooms. At one extreme were several families in which three persons lived in four rooms, while at the other extreme was a family of 13 living in five rooms. The average family, however, consisted of five or six persons, and occupied five rooms.

Rentals had dropped markedly in 1931 as compared with 1926, but even though depreciated, they were much higher than in the other blocks in this study, and definitely placed Palm Street out of the class of the old-fashioned slum. Rentals were so high in comparison to the reported incomes of heads of families that although total family incomes were lacking, one may suspect that an inordinate share of income was being spent for shelter.

In 1926 the range of rentals was from \$40.00 to \$150.00 per month. In 1931 the range was from \$20.00 to \$100.00 per month. The average family in the 1931 sampling paid a rental ranging between \$40.00 and \$60.00 per month.

The frequently heard statement that Negroes tend to pay higher rentals than whites was borne out by the findings. The lowest rent paid by Negroes was \$40.00 per month, whereas eleven Spanish-American families paid rentals of from \$20.00 to \$40.00 per month; and the highest Negro rental was in the \$80.00-\$89.00 group, as compared to the \$70.00-\$79.00 group for the Spanish-American families.

### Language and Literacy

In 1931, two major languages, English and Spanish, were spoken on Palm Street. Of 119 parents, only 10 spoke other languages, and all 10 spoke either English or Spanish in addition to their other languages.

Among 59 fathers, 18 spoke English and 33 spoke Spanish and English; four of the latter spoke a third language. Among 60 mothers, 18 spoke English, 23 spoke Spanish and English, and 4 spoke English plus one or more other foreign languages. Only

5 fathers and 13 mothers spoke Spanish exclusively. In the cases of one father and two mothers, the language spoken was not reported.

The average family, therefore, was bi-lingual, and the parents who spoke no English were relatively few, numbering only 18 out of 119 parents. However, the extent of assimilation of the population of this block should not be measured by these figures since they take no account of the facility with which English was spoken.

Perhaps a better indication of assimilation was the trend of the languages read by these parents. More than half of the fathers and nearly one-half of the mothers claimed to read English exclusively. Four fathers and 15 mothers read a foreign language only, whereas 6 fathers and 6 mothers read a foreign language and a limited degree of English. Five fathers and two mothers read English and two or more foreign languages. Sixteen parents were not recorded. Of those who were recorded, only five (one father and four mothers) admitted total illiteracy.

The wide-spread use of English is to be accounted for by the fact that a large proportion of the Spanish-American residents were of Porto Rican birth and studied English in Porto Rican schools under American tutelage. Mothers, as might be expected, showed much less linguistic assimilation than fathers. A greater proportion of mothers than of fathers spoke and read only in their native languages. Sixty percent of the fathers and only forty-three percent of the mothers read English while six percent of the fathers and twenty-four percent of the mothers read a foreign language only. The readers of foreign languages only were primarily Spanish-American mothers. They were likewise, poorer linguists. A similar trend was noted in 1926.

The majority of homes were barren of reading materials. Among 59 families, 33 were without any books; 16 families had less than 20 books each, and only 10 families had 20 books or over. Among 36 Spanish-American families, only 10 possessed books, whereas of the Negro families, 15 possessed books.

The range of reading was also better among the Negro families. Among those few Spanish families possessing books, 5 had only popular fiction, 2 had religious books, one had school books,

and only two had books dealing with a wider range of interest such as philosophy or music. Among the Negroes, on the other hand, biography, history, and the classics were somewhat more frequently represented. In a few of the families in which no books were seen, newspapers and magazines of the true-story type were found.

This block group had relatively few contacts with the community as a whole for, of 59 families, only three Spanish-American and seven Negro families possessed telephones. Four Spanish-American and one Negro family had access to hall telephones.

Some further measure of the cultural interests of these residents was attempted by an enumeration of the number of families possessing radios, phonographs, and upright pianos. Surprisingly, 37 of 59 families, 21 Spanish and 16 Negro, possessed radios. Twenty-five families, 13 white and 12 Negro, had phonographs, and 16, 10 Negro and 6 white, possessed upright pianos. In one additional Spanish family, a radio was owned by a boarder.

### Broken and Disorganized Homes

The proportion of broken homes in 1931 was very large, 43% being broken by the death or absence of one or both parents. (Table 31, Civil Status of Parents, Palm Street.)

In 35 instances, both parents were living at home; in 7 instances the mother only was living with her children; and in 11 instances of which 7 represented separations, the parents were not living together at the time of survey. Three step-parents and, in several instances, the parent or parents, were living away from their children, who lived on the block with relatives.

White European families were the most intact, and the least intact were the families of the Negroes; 5 of 6 European families were unbroken; 19 of 30 Spanish-American families were unbroken, and only 11 of 24 Negro families were unbroken.

The Spanish-American and Negro family groups in 1931 consisted of more than the normal parent-child group, being augmented in most cases by lodgers and boarders. Thus, among the Spanish-Americans, there were 31 lodgers and boarders in

TABLE 31  
CIVIL STATUS OF PARENTS, PALM STREET, 1926-1931

Civil Status of Parents	Foreign Born				Negro	Native American	North American				
	Totals 1926 1931	Jewish 1926 1931	European 1926 1931	Spanish American 1926 1931				1926 1931	1926 1931	1926 1931	
Father and mother both living—at home	52	23	13	5	12	19	4	11	..	..	..
Father and mother both living—away	2	1	1	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..
Father and mother both living—separated	1	6	..	..	..	3	1	3	..	..	..
Father and mother both living—father away	2	4	..	1	1	3	..	..	..	..	..
Father only living—at home	2	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Father only living—with relatives	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Mother only living—at home	3	7	2	..	1	2	..	5	..	..	..
Mother only living—away	1	1	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..
Father and stepmother	1	2	..	1	..	1	..	1	..	..	..
Father and mother both dead	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..
Father and mother both living—separated and both away	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Stepfather—true mother	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Information not available	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Boy living alone	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..
Totals	66	61	25	17	6	30	6	24	1	1	1

families where the parents numbered 66 individuals; there were 12 lodgers and boarders among Negro families in which there were 43 parents. This high proportion of outsiders living in the family group added to the picture of family disorganization.

### Occupations and Employment of Parents

Contrary to what might have been the expectations for a group of parents living in a fairly good Harlem block, the majority of fathers were either laborers or semi-skilled workers. The proportion of merchants and professional men was small, there being only 3 among 18 Negro fathers and 6 among the 30 Spanish and Spanish-American fathers.

Spanish fathers worked at 24 different occupations while 11 occupations were represented among Negroes.

The classification of occupations was as follows:— Laborers, Negro 4, Spanish 6; Factory Workers, Negro 0, Spanish 3; Skilled mechanics, Negro 1, Spanish 5; Semi-skilled, Negro 1, Spanish 2; Clerical, Negro 4, Spanish 2; Merchants, Negro 0, Spanish 5; Personal service, Negro 2, Spanish 2; Commercial, Negro 0, Spanish 0; Supervisory, Negro 0; Spanish 1; Professional, Negro 3, Spanish 1. The only merchants on the block were Spanish, but the Negroes had twice as many clerical workers as did the Spanish.

It is a matter of considerable interest that the depression had not yet struck either nationality. No father was on emergency relief work, and only three were unemployed. The reversal of the employment situation in this block, as compared to others, is difficult to explain. A possibility is that the persons who remained on the block during the period of depression were of relatively better economic status and, when unemployed, moved away from the block to cheaper quarters. Leases were, of course, not required of tenants on this block.

The Spanish-Americans had a slightly wider range of incomes, but the Negro sampling was so small (9 cases) that the comparison was probably not significant.

Salaries showed a marked drop in comparison with 1926. In 1926, the salaries of 14 of 29 fathers were above \$40.00 whereas,



in 1931, of 32 fathers whose salaries were given, only one was above \$40.00.

### Employment of Mothers

In 1931, 20 of 57 mothers were commercially employed and 37 were house-wives. Four of those commercially employed did home work; the remainder worked away from the home.

The majority of mothers engaged in various types of sewing; 10 were dressmakers, one was a hemstitcher, and one a milliner; 5 mothers did cleaning, 4 as day workers and one as an office cleaner; one was a waitress, one a hair-dresser, and one a stencil caster. Not a mother in the block did clerical or professional work.

Incomes were reported by only 15 mothers; 9 earned \$15.00 a week or less, five earned from \$15.00-\$22.00 a week, and one earned more than \$22.00 weekly.

The exploitation of home workers was illustrated in the case of one mother who made rhinestone straps by machine, for 7c a strap. She worked one-half hour on each, receiving an hourly wage rate of 14c.

### Effects of Economic Depression

The full force of the depression era had not struck Palm Street at the time of the 1931 survey. Many parents worked at temporary jobs or irregularly at reduced incomes, but still managed to carry on. Only two Negro families and three Porto Rican families made direct complaint of economic stress.

A classification of Spanish-American families by economic status disclosed that nine were in good circumstances, with an income that allowed for saving, twenty-one had an income adequate for continuance at a low economic level; two had inadequate incomes and part-time employment; only one case being directly dependent upon public relief. In four instances information was lacking.

The most striking fact about these block residents was the utter lack of a perception of the general economic trend. None seemed to realize that they were in the midst of an era of depres-

sion, nor had any of them any concept of the economic ills of the nation. These people may be described as being not only not class conscious, but economically unconscious. To many of them, America was still the land of golden opportunity.

### Racial Adjustments

Harlem has become the home of peoples who do not draw the color line. Since, in the majority of Spanish-American countries, the Negro has equal status with the white, it is natural that one finds in Harlem a comingling of peoples from all parts of Central and South America, as well as from the West Indies.

The occupation of Harlem by Negroes and Spanish-American nationalities has not been without violence, however. The history of Harlem is replete with incidents of race conflict and violence, resulting from the contact of racial groups of markedly different language, customs, and mores. Previous occupants, entrenched socially and economically, fought desperately to ward off the invasion in order to protect their property values. In lower Harlem, the earlier conflict was between the Jewish and the Porto Rican nationalities. The Jewish groups, over a period of years, had established a solidly Jewish community, characterized by apartment house ownership, control of retail business, and the establishment of such institutions as clubs, neighborhood centers, synagogues, and temples.

The result of this invasion was that those who regarded themselves as superior in social status moved out of the neighborhood, so that, in the course of several years, the neighborhood was completely in the possession of Porto Ricans. The retreat was punctuated by riots, some sanguinary in character, participated in, primarily, by hoodlums of both nationalities.

While the various Spanish-speaking peoples displayed prejudices against one another, the tendency of European nationalities was to lump all Spanish-speaking peoples together and to express hostility toward them indiscriminately.

In the conflict between Spanish-Americans and Negroes for final possession of the block and the neighborhood, the Negroes

appeared to be more favorably situated because they were willing and able to pay higher rentals. The Porto Ricans claimed that the Negroes could afford to pay these higher rents because two or more families frequently occupied the same apartment.

Racial segregation manifested itself in the policies of various landlords. The north side of Palm Street was almost entirely Negro, whereas the Porto Ricans were concentrated on the south side of the street. Certain of the better-kept apartments toward Seventh Avenue housed neither Porto Ricans nor Negroes, but catered to various European nationalities.

The most recent racial clashes in 1931 were between Porto Ricans and Filipinos. Significantly, Porto Ricans voiced the same complaint that had been lodged against them, namely, they accused Filipinos of subjecting Spanish-American women to constant insult.

This sexual jealousy appeared in every racial clash that took place in Harlem, whether between Spanish-Americans and Jews, between Spanish-Americans and Negroes, or between Spanish-Americans and Filipinos.

The mutual suspicion and hostility between Negro and white, Negro and Porto Rican, and between Porto Rican and American white found expression in many ways. In houses occupied by both Negroes and Porto Ricans, the common use of halls and letter boxes was a not infrequent cause of a quarrel, in which a member of one race accused another of purloining mail. Most of the fights between the two races, however, were over women. Racial clashes frequently took place because of the reputedly rough and insolent behavior of many of the Porto Ricans and Cubans at parties. The "rent" party was a source of much dissension because most of them were not by invitation, but were casual affairs to which one invited friends and friends of friends, and so forth, until people of very diverse backgrounds and behavior came into too close proximity.

What happens when race feeling leads to mob action is described in the following excerpt from a newspaper account published in 1931.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, Thursday, July 16, 1931, page 1.

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## 1 SLAIN, 3 WOUNDED IN UPTOWN RACE RIOT

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FILIPINOS CLASH WITH SPANISH-AMERICANS  
AT TWO POINTS IN LOWER HARLEM

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### SHOTS FLY, KNIVES WIELDED

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RIVAL GROUPS, CHARGING INSULTS TO WOMEN,  
FINALLY SUBDUED BY POLICE CLUBS

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Ill feeling between Spanish-Americans and Filipinos which had been smoldering for some time in the section of the city bounded by Fifth and Eighth Avenues and by 110th and 117th Streets, flared up suddenly last night, resulting in two simultaneous riots in which one man is known to have been shot to death, another shot in the hand and two others stabbed. About 1,000 persons took part in the riots. Police believe that there were still other casualties, but that the victims were concealed.

In the last six weeks there have been many fights between Filipinos and other Spanish-speaking residents of the section. On several occasions serious trouble has been averted only by the interference of the police. The Spanish and Latin-American residents charge that their women have been subjected to constant insults by Filipinos. The Filipinos make the same charge against the Spaniards and Latin-Americans.

Just after 10 o'clock last night, while the streets were jammed with men, women and children, seeking relief from the oppressive heat of tenement homes, friction developed between rival groups in Lenox Avenue near 113th Street, and in Fifth Avenue near 115th Street.

### RIOT CALL TURNED IN

In a moment the air was filled with missiles, and knives and pistols were used. Though a strong police guard was on duty in the section at the time, it was unable to stop the brawl. A riot call was turned in. An emergency squad was rushed to the scene and police reserves from every nearby station.

Meanwhile the fights gained momentum. Scores of adherents of each side rushed into the fray. The milling throng in Lenox Avenue

filled the sidewalk and overflowed into the street. The men fought while women and children screamed and scampered to safety.

The fight at Fifth Avenue and 115th Street assumed even larger proportions. Scores of persons in the Latin-American motion picture theatre there, hearing of the tumult, rushed outside to see what was going on. Many took part in the fighting. The struggling mass of humanity rolled like a great tide up Fifth Avenue. They crashed into show cases outside shops, overturning the cases, shattering the glass and scattering the contents over the sidewalk. The air was thick with menacing bullets. Knives flashed in the lights of show-windows. The rioters surged across 115th Street and on towards 116th, sweeping pedestrians before it. Many women and children were knocked down and trampled.

Then sirens announced the arrival of police reserves. The policemen came from the East 104th and East 126th Street stations on one side, and from the West 100th, West 123rd and West 135th Street stations on the other.

With swinging clubs they rushed into action, one group centering its attention on the combatants at Lenox Avenue and 113th Street, and other groups stemming the tide that rushed up Fifth Avenue. Their presence, but little heeded at first, soon manifested itself in well aimed blows from nightsticks.

Soon groups of fighters detached themselves from the larger masses and disappeared. Then, suddenly, the masses themselves separated, and the combatants fled in all directions. They dodged into side streets and lost themselves in the neighboring tenements. . . .

### Racial Prejudices

Race prejudice was expressed by 11 of 17 families. One Porto Rican mother expressed antagonism to West Indian Negroes, claiming that they were very antagonistic to Porto Ricans. She stated that her children were insulted and assaulted on the street and at school by gangs of Negro children.

A Porto Rican boarder complained that Porto Ricans had a bad reputation because many ill-behaved Cubans and Mexicans, when arrested, claimed to be Porto Ricans because the latter are American citizens. A South American mother displayed prejudice against Porto Ricans on the ground that they had been allowed to enter the United States in an unselected mass, and

constituted as a result, a poor and ignorant element. A white mother from the Dutch East Indies expressed strong prejudice against Negroes, saying they were inconsiderate, lived in congested quarters, disturbed neighbors by noisy rent parties, and tended to oust whites by offering higher rents for identical quarters.

A Cuban father complained of the treatment he received by all nationalities except native Americans. He stated that among the Spanish-speaking groups there was much isolation instead of unity, one group despising the other. As a result, he stated, there were no community institutions fostering intellectual contact among Spanish-speaking peoples.

A white Dominican mother was the only one to express a prejudice against Jewish families, although a Porto Rican mother stated, with some resentment, that her children were apparently not wanted in schools attended by white children. A Spanish mother displayed prejudice against Negroes.

### The Role of Social Institutions in Family Life

The organization affiliations of Palm Street parents in 1931 revealed an absence of interest in social activities outside of the home. Among 103 parents there were only 28 affiliations. Inasmuch as several parents belonged to more than one organization, the proportion of parents with interests outside of the home was approximately one in five. Mothers had a proportionately larger representation, 13 of 57, compared to 9 of 45 fathers.

The largest proportion of affiliations was found among the Negroes where, among 35 parents, 13 (8 mothers and 5 fathers) had 19 affiliations. Three fathers belonged to churches, 3 to fraternal societies, and 2 to labor unions. Three mothers belonged to churches, 1 to a political club, 4 to fraternal societies, and 3 to social clubs.

Only 9 of 68 Spanish-American parents had organization interests. Five mothers were church-goers while of 4 fathers, one attended church, 2 belonged to a political club, and one to a benefit society.

There appeared to be several reasons for this lack of com-

munity interest. In the first place, racial conflict between Porto Ricans and Negroes was so strong that neither group would support an organization that had any semblance of membership from the other race.<sup>5</sup> Jealousies among the various Spanish nationalities were another potent source of community disorganization. Some nationalities stressed their cultural superiority over others and refused to affiliate with them.

Undoubtedly, a large element in the situation was the recency of immigration of a large proportion of the block members, many of whom appeared to be engrossed in the physical task of earning a livelihood.

### Community Attitudes of Residents

The analysis of an immigrant community is not complete unless the investigator knows the extent of the immigrant's adjustment to the new surroundings and whether or not he regards his new home as a permanent one. When an immigrant is dissatisfied and disappointed and looks yearningly toward his home country, his adaptation to and participation in the social life of his new land is inhibited by his emotional rejection of his new milieu. Therefore an attempt was made to record the attitudes toward their community of the block residents.

Of the seventeen families who expressed themselves articulately with regard to their emotional adaptation, seven were adjusted, five maladjusted, and five were undecided. The adjusted families favored the new community primarily because of the opportunity for employment, but also because of the increased opportunities for the education of children, better home conditions, cheaper and more wholesome food, and a more healthful climate. One parent liked the great variety of amusements available here. Several Spanish-American mothers stressed the fact that they had more liberty here and could work outside of the

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<sup>5</sup> The religious affiliations of Palm Street parents and children were closely correlated with nationality, or race. There were no Jews in the 1931 sampling and the small group of white Western Europeans were Catholic. All Negro families but one were Protestant, and the majority of the Spanish-Americans were Roman Catholic.

home without arousing unfavorable comment among the neighbors.

An outstanding factor in maladjustment appeared to be the feeling of lack of status. All unadjusted families spoke with feeling of being discriminated against because of their race or nationality.

### Attitudes toward the Neighborhood

The attitudes that residents expressed in enumerating the advantages and disadvantages of the block gave striking illustration of racial conflict. The Spanish and Spanish-American families proved to be more dissatisfied than satisfied with the block, and by far more aware of racial and nationality differences.

Among 17 Negro families, 26 favorable and 13 unfavorable sentiments were voiced, whereas, among 34 Spanish and Spanish-American families, only 23 favorable and 42 unfavorable attitudes were given. Thus, 35% of the attitudes of Spaniards toward the block were favorable whereas, among the Negroes, 66% of the attitudes were favorable.<sup>6</sup>

The expressed attitudes were classified as representing advantages affecting children, adults, and both. Eight of 39 comments by Negroes, and 13 of 65 comments by Spanish-Americans dealt with children. The Negro parents stressed the advantages for children, whereas the Spanish-Americans emphasized the disadvantages.

Five Negro parents appreciated the proximity of the parks and only two felt there was no place for the children to play; three Spaniards noted the lack of play space and only one appreciated the parks. One Negro felt that his children had good playmates, but not a single Spaniard commented favorably upon play relations among children. Seven parents commented unfavorably; two claimed that children used vulgar language, four said children were hurt by gangs of Negro children, and one complained that the children had poor playmates.

Two Spanish parents appreciated the fact that the children

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<sup>6</sup>Some individuals voiced more than one attitude, and some attitudes were irrelevant, in that they did not deal with the block.



could play in the street because there was relatively little traffic.

A number of attitudes related to adults only, e.g., three Negroes and four Spaniards approved of the cheap rents.

The rest of the attitudes dealt with the social status and social needs of adults. The expressed attitudes betrayed the lack of adjustment of Negroes in relation to Spaniards, and the feeling of isolation of many parents for lack of suitable community social centers. One Negro family thought the block had social advantages. This family felt that it had advanced in social scale by moving into the block, there being "more high-class American families than uptown."

The rest of the attitudes were unfavorable. Fifteen Spaniards complained there were too many Negroes and one Negro complained there were too many Spaniards on the block. Two Negroes and a Spaniard complained of racial differences, and three Spanish-Americans complained of low type neighbors. Five Negroes complained of the lack of social centers, and one Spaniard complained of difficulty in finding friends.

The attitudes expressed by these block residents gave a picture of a population primarily limited in its concepts to concrete issues. Here, more than in other blocks, the factor of racial conflict provided an emotional basis for many expressions dealing with social inadequacy and lack of status. There was a surprising lack of generalizations dealing with the future. All seemed preoccupied with either the present or the very immediate future. Distant goals, philosophies of life, awareness of broad social movements, preoccupation with political and economic questions, all these had no place in the mental framework of the residents of this block, insofar as was revealed in their interviews.

It is questionable how much of this mental inadequacy represented fundamental dullness and how much of it represented either a lack of mental stimulus or an unfamiliarity with the materials of American culture. This much was evident—that among several families who gave other evidences of being of an intellectual type, critical estimates of the American scene were made, even though the persons expressing these attitudes were relatively recent new-comers to the United States.

### Social Changes Due to Migration

The transplantation of a group of families from a native to an alien culture, even though the families cluster together, usually results in a marked weakening of native customs and in a reduction in the number of institutionalized forms which accompany the immigrants into the new setting. As a result, many families become isolated in the alien community.

The Porto Rican investigator who conducted the interviews for this survey was struck by the isolation of the Porto Rican family, an isolation which was in painful contrast to the intimacy which had characterized neighborhood relations in the small towns and villages from which most of them were drawn. The investigator found them reduced only to the family circle, without outside contacts. Many refrained from making new friendships for fear that they would lose their social status by mingling with Spanish-speaking families of a lower type. Porto Rican families from the cities were averse to having their children mingle with those from the country. Others feared contacts with strangers because they had been deceived many times by salesmen for installment houses.

An important change was noted in the status of the Porto Rican girl. In Porto Rico, girls were reared strictly, and within a limited social sphere, in the Spanish tradition, but the American influence caused the daughters to seek greater independence and freedom from parental control. As a result, some Porto Rican mothers disliked rearing their daughters here. Other Porto Rican women, however, approved of the new environment because it gave them more personal liberty.

### Period of Residence

The transitional status of Palm Street in 1931 was seen in the lack of permanency of residence of its occupants, as compared to other blocks. The majority of the Spanish-American families and nearly half of the Negro families had lived on the block less than one year.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The length of residence for 55 of the 62 families, by nationality, was: Under one year, Spanish-American, 27; Negro, 8; one year, Spanish-American, 4;

## Adult Anti-Social Behavior

Police records disclosed that theft, sex assault, prostitution, and gambling were the chief offenses of block residents. The gross total of arrests varied considerably from year to year, dependent primarily upon the amount of police activity in the suppression of gambling and prostitution. Thus, in 1930, there were 52 arrests and in 1931 there were 25 arrests; but 44 of the arrests in the earlier year were on gambling and prostitution charges, whereas only four arrests in 1931 were for gambling, and there were none for prostitution. The majority of the 1930 prostitution arrests were on the charge of soliciting but several were for operating houses of prostitution.

In 1931, nine block residents were arrested on serious charges, one for attempted burglary, two for unlawful entry, three for petit larceny, one for felonious assault and two for rape. There were five arrests for unspecified types of disorderly conduct, four for gambling, one for non-support; and six for possession of drugs, opium in five instances and heroin in one instance.

The complaints in 1931 dealt primarily with burglary and assault. There were four complaints of burglarized apartments, one of attempted burglary, one of unlawful entry by forcing a transom; and four complaints dealing with felonious assaults, three by shooting and one by striking. There was one complaint of a stolen auto and one of a broken telephone coin box. One person was reported missing.

In consideration of the fact that the National Prohibition Act was still in operation in 1931, there was an inexplicable absence of arrests for violation of Prohibition laws. This was probably due to the fact that bootlegging was carried on in flat speak-easies and not in commercial premises. There was only one restaurant speakeasy on the block. The absence of arrests for prostitution in 1931 did not mean that prostitution on this block had been stamped out in 1930, but that there had been fewer complaints by citizens. This may well be a measure of the decline in ethical standards of the block.

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Negro, 1; two to five years, Spanish-American, 3; Negro, 8; six to nine years, Spanish-American, 1; Negro, 2.

Whereas gambling, prostitution and violation of the Prohibition Amendment were frequent offenses on this block, these offenses do not necessarily stamp this block as being as criminalistic as others in the study. For these offenses are offenses against public policy rather than against the security of the state. They are an accurate reflection of the mores of the community but cast no reflection upon the fundamental honesty of its residents.

Certainly gambling and prostitution were wide-open, publicly acknowledged activities in Harlem, and bootlegging, in 1931, was an honorable, if not a lawful occupation. Many other offenses, particularly assaults, had their origin in the gambling and drinking habits of the community. Many of these assaults occurred at "rent" parties to which people were invited more or less indiscriminately, and where sexual advances resulted in jealous brawls.<sup>8</sup>

Many comments of block residents dealt with the more hilarious aspects of block life. One Cuban father stated that his family was frequently annoyed at night by persons who knocked at the door in search of gambling houses and houses of prostitution. A Dominican mother stated that across the street there appeared to be operating a house of prostitution, having American girl inmates whose customers were usually Filipinos and Porto Ricans. A Colombian mother stated that there were a great many noisy parties and that several nights prior to the survey visit, all of the furniture of a top-floor apartment was thrown through the windows into the backyard, during a police raid.

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<sup>8</sup> A "rent" party is a party to which admission is charged and at which food and drinks are sold, the proceeds of which are used toward the payment of the next month's rent. Parties are usually given on the eve of a monthly rental payment.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE CHILD

**I**N 1931, 44 of 51 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years were attending school. Thirty-five were in elementary public school, 4 in junior high school, and 5 were attending general high schools. There were no children in parochial schools.

Because of the youth of most of the boys, it was difficult to determine the educational standards of the block population. It is significant that not one boy was attending either college or university, and only three were receiving voluntary instruction, two in evening elementary school and one in evening high school. Because all boys of school age were attending all-day school, none were listed as pupils in continuation schools. All other instruction was compulsory, as required under the educational law.

The number of boys receiving secondary education was too small to admit of any comparison between Spanish and Negroes. Of the boys beyond school age, 7 had not completed elementary school, 3 had been graduated from elementary school, and 3 had attended high school but had not been graduated; one boy had commercial school training, one was privately tutored and never attended public school, and the status of two was not known. Four of these boys had had trade training besides academic studies.

The future ambitions of the children attending school were of interest. Six had generalized desires for higher education, 2 wished to attend high school, 3 hoped to attend college, and one aspired to a university education. Seven had professional ambitions that would have involved higher education, one wishing to be a civil engineer, one an engineer, one a dentist, two to be physicians and two to be lawyers. Mechanical pursuits interested

seven; of these, 3 wished to be mechanics, two to be auto mechanics, and two to be aviators.

Music as a career interested one child and art interested two. Nine boys (8 Negro—1 Spanish) had no ambitions whatsoever for the future.

### Retardation

School children on this block were excessively retarded. Of 45 children on whom school reports were obtained, only 3 boys were at grade; the majority being retarded from one to three terms. Twenty-seven were retarded up to three terms and 15 were retarded from four to nine terms.

While the number of retardations was equally divided among age levels, twenty-three of the 45 retardations being among children in grades 1A to 4B, and 22 being among the remaining grades from 5A through 9B, there was greater retardation in the higher grades. Out of the 23 retardations below the 5A grade, 7 were for three terms or more whereas, among 22 retardations in the 5A grade and above, 14 were for three terms or more.

The evenness of the frequency distribution of retardation among all grades leads to the belief that low mentality was not the major factor in retardation in this block, and that recency of immigration and its attendant problems of linguistic handicaps and differences in educational content served to retard younger as well as older children. In several schools the language handicaps of Spanish-speaking children, even though born in the United States, was so great that special language instruction had to be given to them.

### School Attendance

Among 40 boys for whom absences were recorded in the autumn semester of 1931-1932, the range was from no absences to 16 absences during the term. Three children had perfect attendance records and 22 were absent from one to five days during the term. Twelve were absent from six to nine days and there were three cases of fairly prolonged absence.

In general, the amount of absence was not sufficient to affect

proficiency, but absences were more frequent among children under the age of ten as compared with those between the ages of ten and fourteen years.

### Attitudes Toward School

Of 24 boys whose attitudes were recorded, 13 were favorable toward school and 7 were either unfavorable or were handicapped in some way; 4 were doubtful or passive in accepting school as a necessity. Only four of the boys were Negroes; the remainder were Spanish.

Five children below the age of ten showed very little interest. To judge from their aptitude, however, two of the five had poor school records. One of them had been retarded and showed a disinclination to study; the other had been obliged to leave school on account of ill health. Among children between 10 and 14, one Negro and three Spanish boys had good records, and three Spanish boys and one Negro had poor records. Of the latter, one Negro boy of 14 was placed in a boarding school for delinquents for truancy and bad company. Of the four boys who were fond of school, two had definite educational ambitions.

Among boys between the ages of 15 and 17, only one boy, a Negro lad of 17, expressed a lack of interest in school.

### Religious and Cultural Education

The church had a strong hold upon block residents. Of the 55 boys who attended Sunday Schools regularly, 22 attended Protestant and 33 attended Catholic schools. The attendance was much better among children of Spanish-American parents, for only 12 Negro children attended Sunday School. Of 21 boys who received cultural education, 14 were studying music, 5 were receiving language instruction, and 2 were library members.

### Employment of Boys

In 1931, few boys entered skilled trades, and the majority were in dead-end jobs that had no especial future and the tenure of

which was likely to be short. (Table 32, Occupations and Earnings of Palm Street Boys.) There were no significant occupational differences between Spanish-American and Negro boys except that those boys who were helpers to skilled mechanics were all Spanish-American.

Although many had had trade training or experience, those occupied as helpers in skilled trades were only a fraction of their number. Twelve boys had obtained some form of trade experience, four in school and eight on the job; the latter, consisting of 3 in auto mechanics, 2 in painting, 1 as an electrician, 1 as a mechanic, and 1 as a carpenter's helper. Trade training in school had been received by one boy each, in airplane mechanics, auto mechanics and linotyping, printing, and cabinet making, of which the latter had been in Continuation school. Yet only three boys were employed in skilled trades, 2 as painter's helpers and one as an electrician's helper, both being occupations related to house redecoration and renovation.

A total of sixteen boys were employed full-time, two worked part-time, and one was unemployed. All save one, a laundry helper, were over 17. Eight were employed as laborers; 2 as porters, one as a garage attendant, 3 as elevator boys, one as an errand boy and one as a chauffeur. Three, as previously reported, were helpers in trades. Three were clerical workers, 2 working as shipping clerks and one as an office boy. Two were laundry workers.

Twelve of the 18 boys earned between \$10.00 and \$19.00 a week, two earned between \$20.00 and \$29.00 a week, and only one, an elevator boy, earned under \$10.00 a week.

Only three school boys were employed after school and weekends, compared with 16 in 1926. One carried meals, 3:30 to 8:00 P.M., one was an elevator operator from 6:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M., and one sold newspapers on the street after 10:00 P.M.

Of the 16 boys who reported upon their methods of securing employment in 1931, 9 followed the leads given by relatives, friends and acquaintances; 3 made a personal canvas, one read the newspaper want ads, one used the employment services of the Urban League, and 2 obtained their jobs through commercial employment agencies.



TABLE 32

## OCCUPATIONS AND EARNINGS OF PALM STREET BOYS, BY AGE-GROUPS, 1926 AND 1931

Age-Group:	Total		Under \$10 Per Week		\$10-19		\$20-29		\$30-39		\$40-50		Not Reported	
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931
	<i>Seventeen and Over:</i>													
<i>Skilled Trade:</i>														
Painter .....	1	..	..	..	..	..	1*	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Painter's helper .....	..	2	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Electrician's helper .....	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Semi-skilled:</i>														
Chauffeur .....	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Laborer:</i>														
Building maintenance..	2	5	..	1	..	4	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1*
Garage .....	..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Errands .....	..	3	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Factory .....	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Clerical:</i> .....	3	3	..	..	2	2	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Commercial:</i>														
Laundry .....	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Salesman .....	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..
Totals .....	9	17	0	1	2	12	3	2	1	0	1	0	1	2
<i>Sixteen and Under:</i>														
<i>Professional:</i>														
Musician .....	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
<i>Unskilled:</i>														
Helper .....	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Errands .....	6	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3
News-boy .....	1	..	1*	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Clerical:</i> .....	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
<i>Commercial:</i>														
Shop helper .....	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3
Manager .....	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Totals .....	14	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	1

\* For parent.

## Play and Recreation

The boy population of Palm Street consisted in 1931 of pre-adolescent Spanish-American boys and older Negro boys. In the survey sampling there was a preponderance of younger boys. In view of this, it is not surprising to find that 31 children were reported as participating in play within the home. Ten played the piano, ten read, and three listened to the radio. Specific forms of play were not reported for the others. Play within the home was a possibility in the block, not alone because of the youth of many of the boys, but because of the comparative lack of home congestion. (Table 33, Recreational Affiliations, Interests, and Play Places of Palm Street Boys.)

The street itself was a favorite place for play, as reported by 47 of 98 boys. Street play was systematically observed on this block by survey assistants.<sup>1</sup> The outstanding observation was that the majority had not learned to play complex team games. Very few played such games as stick-ball or punch-ball, the usual activities being games such as "tag," individual play with toys, or aimless activity as rough-housing, gossiping or loitering.

Of 160 boys who were observed, 11 engaged in team games, 44 in activities having a low form of social organization, and 75 in informal, or casual play. The remainder were either arriving or leaving, alone or with adults. The greatest amount of organization in play was among boys who appeared to be between twelve and fifteen years of age. Of these, 29 were engaged in play having some degree of organization and 19 in casual activity. Among children apparently under 12, 22 were at play in some degree of organization, and 42 were in casual activities. Among the small group of adolescents who remained on the block, 14 of 18 engaged in social diversions, such as talking, joking or flirting, rather than play.

Race consciousness entered into play, as seen in the racial composition of play groups. In only eight of 44 play groups that were observed were children of more than one nationality par-

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<sup>1</sup>During October and November, 1931, a group of students from the division of sociology of the College of the City of New York engaged in observations of street play, in connection with this survey.

TABLE 33

RECREATIONAL AFFILIATIONS, INTERESTS AND PLAY PLACES OF PALM STREET BOYS, 1926-1931

Place of Recreation:	Totals		Ages				18-21 Years 1926 1931
	1926	1931	6-9 Years		10-14 Years		
			1926	1931	1926	1931	
<i>Home:</i>							
Musical instruments	10	16	2	..	3	5	8
Radio and victrola	4	5	..	..	4	3	2
Reading (public library books)	12	4	..	..	2	..	4
Reading, own books	1	6	1	..	..	6	..
<i>Outdoor:</i>							
Local parks	84	82	5	..	18	43	21
Local playgrounds	2	2	..	..	..	..	..
Street, yards	72	59	3	..	16	32	2
Roofs	7	3	..	..	4	1	2
Piers	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Supervised Indoor Clubs:</i>							
Church and synagogue clubs	3	2	..	..	..	2	..
Settlement House clubs	7	1	..	..	..	1	..
Public school clubs	2	1	..	..	1	1	..
National boy's work agencies	3	8	1	..	1	3	5
Community centers	3	5	1	..	..	1	4
College organizations	3	1	..	..	1	..	3
Radical political group	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
Other	4	2	2	..	1	1	..
<i>Un-supervised Clubs:</i>							
Baseball clubs	5	1	1	..	1	1	3
Social clubs	2	2	..	..	2	2	..
<i>Commercial Resources:</i>							
Motion pictures	48	55	3	..	10	30	17
Other theatres	3	11	..	..	..	1	6
Pool rooms	1	4	1	..	..	1	1
Cafes	..	1	..	..	..	..	..
Dance halls	1	4	..	..	1	..	3
Prize fights	7	7	..	..	..	2	4
Vaudeville	..	6	..	..	..	2	3
Other	..	2	..	..	..	1	1
<i>Summer Recreation:</i>							
Camp	2	11	..	..	..	6	3
Country and shore	21	13	2	..	3	7	3
Organized outings	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Family outings	23	26	1	..	2	6	12
Swimming, pools	2	7	1	..	..	4	2
Swimming, beaches	4	41	1	..	3	15	20
Swimming, Hudson river	1	3	..	..	..	3	1
Bus riding	..	4	..	..	..	4	..

ticipants. In three instances, Negro and Porto Rican boys; in four instances, Negro and white European boys; and in one instance, Jewish and Porto Rican boys played together. In 24 instances, Negroes; in 10 instances, Porto Ricans; and in 2 instances, white boys, played alone.

The greatest amount of racial mingling in play took place in the twelve to fifteen year age group, where organized play was most frequent. Among children under 12, in only 3 of 18 groups was there race mingling, and among nine groups of adolescents between the ages of 16 and 21, there was no race mingling. In other words, race mingling was most common in activities that had become controlled through rules. In these activities, intimacy of contact was subordinate to adherence to rules. In the adolescent group, where social activity was of a more intimate type, racial mingling ceased.

The neighborhood surrounding Palm Street was deficient in indoor recreational facilities for children. There was neither a boy's club, settlement house or neighborhood center within walking distance of the block. The majority of boys, 72 of 98 in 1931, therefore, in addition to street play, engaged in unsupervised play in near-by Central Park.

Supervised play in indoor centers reached only 20 of 98 Palm Street boys, who attended either the recreational activities of neighborhood Spanish churches, the extra-curricular programs of their high schools, or community centers such as the *Y. M. C. A.*, to which they had to travel outside of the neighborhood. Neighborhood elementary schools were not available for supervised after-school play. The proportion of those engaging in supervised play, approximately one in five, while low, was nevertheless average in comparison to the proportion estimated as participant in organized play throughout the city.

Recreational statistics revealed certain interesting differences in supervised play among the nationality groups. Negro boys appeared to be least frequently engaged in supervised play. In 1931, only 9 of 38 Negro boys reported community recreational affiliations, 4 being *Boy Scouts* and one a scoutmaster. The inadequacy of supervised play was undoubtedly due to the lack of recreational facilities for Negroes and to the social hindrances

put in the way of Negro participation in community programs intended primarily for other racial groups.

The few native white American boys left in the community in 1931 had no supervised recreational affiliations. The number of group affiliations among the Spanish-American boys cannot be compared to those of the other groups because, in 1931, the majority of Spanish-American boys were in the younger age groups and would be less likely to participate in supervised recreation.

There was only a small number of self-organized independent, unsupervised club groups on the block, and very slight evidence of gang activity, as well, in contrast to those blocks where there was less population mobility. Since both the delinquent gang and the independent club group are usually products of at least several years of association, the observation of lack of clique formation in this block seems to hint that gang formation is a concomitant of slums of stable population, rather than of slums in population transition, where the family is highly mobile.

### Age Group Play Tendencies

The recreational interests of the children varied widely within different age groups. Children below the age of six spent most of their time indoors, although a few were allowed to go out alone. Their activities consisted of playing with toys, small bicycles, and automobiles, listening to the radio, looking at the comic paper and pretending to read and write.

There was very little group play, and the movies did not yet have an appeal. One or two children were allowed to go to a nearby grocery store on the block when no other child was available to run errands. In this age group, those who played on the street suffered from the molestation of older children, who stole their toys and took away their tricycles.

The six-year old children began to engage in more active play, attempted to play ball, engaged in mimicry, and pretended to be chauffeurs, soldiers, etc., and simple games, such as dominoes, began to be understood. Several children expressed a keen interest in music and dancing.

The seven and eight year old boys became even more active; they played ball, skated, pretended to be boy scouts, played in groups, and ventured as far as a vacant lot on the adjoining street. Gang activities began in a small way, with boys who stole potatoes and cooked them in pails. The group spirit began to assert itself, and boys refused to allow their friends to stop playing games until dark. Children who quit beforehand were licked. Children who went home when their mothers called them were given sixty punches on the shoulder with bare knuckles. Racial antipathies began to assert themselves, with Negro boys chasing Spanish-American boys and beating them when they went to the store.

In the ten to fourteen year group, a wide variety of play interests were observed. Play motivation was more clearly discerned, and character traits and aptitudes displayed themselves. Specialized interests in mechanical construction, reading, and athletics were reported. Boys in this age group were members of teams and clubs. Some went considerable distance from home, even participating in hikes.

In the fifteen to seventeen year old group, the recreations of the previous age group were carried on, but boys began to plan for the future and spent part of their time at hobbies that indicated future interests. In this age group, the adolescent feeling of insecurity caused some boys to turn to their mothers for counsel and guidance. Fantasies, dealing with brave exploits, occupied the thoughts of others. Several boys settled upon their future careers. One, for example, wished to be a mail clerk; another aspired to be a professional second in the boxing ring.

Boys over eighteen carried on many of the activities of the previous age group, but a strong interest in girls, parties, and dancing began to assert itself. Adult personalities, such as the student, the gambler, the athlete, etc., began to appear.

### Commercial Recreations

Commercial recreations claimed a large attendance in 1931. Fifty-five of 98 boys attended motion picture theatres, and a much smaller number attended other commercial recreations,

TABLE 34  
PARENTAL SUPERVISION OF PALM STREET BOYS, BY AGE GROUPS, 1926-1931

Type of Supervision	Totals		Ages									
	Under 6		6-9		10-14		15-17		18 Plus			
	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931	1926	1931		
Supervision over hours .....	85	70	25	26	20	17	24	15	11	5	7	
None over hours .....	14	4	..	..	1	..	4	1	2	..	3	
Not stated for hours .....	12	13	1	..	4	3	4	4	1	4	2	
Total .....	111	87	26	26	25	20	32	20	14	9	12	
Supervision over activities .....	80	55	25	18	17	14	22	13	11	3	6	
None over activities .....	19	8	..	1	3	1	7	1	2	2	3	
Not stated for activities .....	12	24	1	7	5	5	3	6	1	4	3	
Total .....	111	87	26	26	25	20	32	20	14	9	12	
No supervision .....	..	5	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	3	

viz:— legitimate theatres 11; dance halls 4; pool rooms 4; prize fights 7; and vaudeville 6.

Attending commercial recreations involved travelling away from the block, as there was no licensed commercial amusement on the block save one dance hall, and this was not frequented by any of the boys visited in connection with this survey. Most of the boys looked at this dance hall with some suspicion and a degree of fear, because of its unsavory reputation.

### Summer Recreations

There was a marked degree of recreational activity during the summer. Swimming was a favorite sport, particularly among Spanish-American boys. In 1931, 51 boys went swimming and 26 boys went on day outings to the beaches and parks.

Only 20 boys enjoyed the privilege of summer camp or extended country visits. The majority of these boys were Spanish-American.

### Parental Supervision

A study of the extent to which parents exerted control over children with regard to their hours and activities showed that the great majority of children were supervised for both hours and activities. Below the age of 14, practically all children were under parental restriction. Above the age of 14, however, to judge from the small sampling of cases, there was a considerable increase in freedom of movement. (Table 34, Parental Supervision of Palm Street Boys.)

Parents seemed to be more concerned about the hours children kept than they were about the activities in which their children engaged. Of 92 boys, 70 were supervised as to hours of coming and going, but only 55 were supervised with regard to activities.

Most of the children below the age of six years were reported as being always under parental observation. Some mothers stated that they did not allow their children to play on the street alone, but several allowed their children to play in front of the house, with strict orders not to cross the street. One working mother had to depend upon neighbors to supervise a child of five.



With the beginning of public school attendance, there was a perceptible increase in children's freedom and, whereas most six and seven year old children were still very closely supervised, several went to school by themselves. The seven and eight year olds were allowed still more freedom, but the mothers tried to learn where the children were.

In the ten to fourteen year old group, complete supervision was the exception rather than the rule. Usually a child would tell his parents where he was going and the parent would accept the child's statement without investigation. Delinquency made its appearance in this group in three instances.

In the fifteen to seventeen year old group, the small number of cases that were in the survey sampling indicated obedience to parental command, with no delinquency. Boys beyond the age of eighteen were either completely unsupervised or had fairly close supervision with regard to their whereabouts.

In general, there appeared to be more supervision over boys on this block than was found on other blocks. This fact would seem to correlate rather well with the limited degree of known delinquency among these boys.

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE SURVEY COMMITTEE

### Help Can Come!

**I**F THE EXPERIENCE of the reader is that of the members of the Survey Committee, he will have read through this human document with some astonishment and much perplexity. The picture of the slums is always disheartening. The task of eliminating cultural lag seems to be resting on the doorstep of the schools. And yet, as noted in the Foreword, the task of adapting the schools to the newer conception of social service is enormous in magnitude and complexity. How can civic service and organizations and other socially minded bodies and individuals serve? How can they place service above self? How can they orient their tested qualities of leadership into civic, social, collective action? How can they convert pious wishes into effective deeds? How can they make the American dream come true?

The corrective required of this slum problem requires a consideration of both the adult and the child. Their problems interlock, but the solutions are not identical. They are economic, physical and cultural.

### The Adult

The adult enters this survey only as an influence on the child. The improvement of his lot is therefore considered as incident to the amelioration of the child's—the first interlocking phase.

#### 1. *Economic*

Since every person or agency with intelligence, from the Federal Government down, is at present engaged in fabricating a program of constructive and permanent economic betterment for all classes, suggestions of a definite nature here would be trite. Suffice as an objective that the subject of this survey, who

in the main represent the utter bottom of the economic heap, be provided consistent earnings, at the subsistence level at least. Removing the drag of permanent or periodic destitution, misery and hopelessness by an intelligent economy is the first step in permitting the self-assertion of manhood as opposed to the bestiality induced by despair.

## 2. *Physical*

Perhaps the most horrifying part of this survey is the description of conditions under which most of its subjects make their homes. The thought that society should have condemned any portion of its population to live like pigs is more bearable than that it should permit a continuation of such conditions, however habituated or inured they and we have become thereto.

A splendid theoretical start of slum clearance has already been made in New York, and the influence of Rotarians should be directed to its continuance there and emulation elsewhere, but the efficacy of the movement is endangered by our historic American enthusiasm for pendulum-riding: we find the housing pendulum swinging into the depths of the slum cesspool, so we swing it back clear through the roof by replacing these sties with garden apartments so elaborate and costly that they must perforce seek tenants of an entirely different economic level, and in effect tell those dispossessed by the improvement to go find another sty. This is slum transposition, not slum clearance,—picturesque, but ineffectual and costly.

When we tear down one of these human abattoirs it should be replaced by a plain, relatively cheap structure purported to house those who formerly tenanted the premises, or their ilk. It should contain intelligently planned apartments providing light, air, heat, toilet and bath facilities, and safety.

## 3. *Cultural*

Remove the pressure of economic incapacity, provide plain, clean, safe habitation, and give culture a chance to operate naturally. Eliminating the relatively infinitesimal percentage of morons, degenerates, etc., which is a problem of segregation properly for the hands of the State, and the few congenital ani-

mals who will have to be educated or bludgeoned into compliance, the mental activity hitherto given over to coping with economic duress and its concomitants, must of necessity turn to the cultural.

It matters not whether this direct itself to a study of music or literature, or to the contented contemplation of an adjacent brick wall, whatever the cultural capacity and bent of the individual mind, that fulfillment will it seek. No normal human neglects or mistreats its offspring unless so harried by the insupportables of life as to distort its very instinct. Assure the parent of contentment of the animal needs at least, and you assure the child of at least animal care, which is a lot more than some of these survey subjects have been getting, and, as is readily apparent to anyone who has ever watched a cat, dog, or hen cuddling her young, is not to be sneered at.

## The Child

### 1. *Economic*

This interlocking phase with that of the Adult is readily apparent. While it is not intended to suggest that it provide any materially greater degree of parental largess, nor absolve the child from odd job or like earnings, it should however, remove any urgent pressure for discontinuing school at the earliest possible moment, solidify the family life by eliminating or limiting the Mother's outside employment, provide regularity and suitability of meals, adequate clothing, sanitation, and medical care, as well as contributing psychologically to a better understanding between the child and parents, and more time and less stress for the nutriment thereof.

### 2. *Physical*

So far as the physical status and equipment of the home is concerned, this phase completely interlocks with that of the parent. It also, in addition to the dietary and other economic details furnishes a site for indoor play, study, and intercourse not available in the present congested and dilapidated slum home. The child's physique and nervous system, reacting to the im-

proved surroundings and parent psychology, must inestimably benefit. Too many children, even if not conscious of the squalor and stress of their present existence to any great degree, are so infected by contact with the unhappiness, hopelessness and panic of the parents as to affect vitally their entire organism, as well as frequently to make them the victims of parental neglect and lack of understanding, not to mention exasperation. These are not normal households. They cannot produce normal children.

### 3. *Cultural*

The child's day is, aside from his sleeping hours, divided into three almost equal spheres of influence, in the home, the school, and the play periods. The home period's influence needs little elaboration beyond that already suggested on a basis of primary culture. It is true that in children of this economic group it will, and properly should, in most cases seek a fulfillment beyond the cultural requirements of the parents. It is also true that in most cases parental furtherance of these requirements cannot be forthcoming, even though understood and intentioned. Society can and should contribute to correcting this deficiency. The neighborhood club or playground, whether municipally or philanthropically provided, should be more numerous and more conscious of its function to this end. The supervision of children attending these common meeting places should have less of the drill master or police atmosphere, and more of the counselor or "big brother," but it must be devoid of the condescension, hypersensitive piety, and insistence on a philosophy of super-human ideals, the occasional taint of which has characterized "settlement work" in the past.

Too much money, inventiveness and effort simply cannot be expended on this type of endeavor. The underprivileged child must be made to feel membership rather than sufferance. He must here accustom himself to normal contacts with his fellow beings without either the rigid discipline necessary in school, or the probable lack of it at home. He can learn more of orderliness, self-discipline, cleanliness, sportsmanship and character, as well as intelligent employment of leisure, here than anywhere

else in the world. It would be an insuperable task to inculcate this influence into the home—it is comparatively simple to implant it in the child through organized athletics and other games, theatricals, entertainments and the like. The school has perhaps most readily at hand a machinery for its purpose, and, notably in New York, is alive to its opportunity.

### Our Expanding Program of Education

There has been an unprecedented expansion in the American education during the past decade. We have crowded more months into the school year. We have extended the age range to include little children in the kindergarten, and old men and women in the evening schools. Seven million boys and girls crowd our high schools, and more than a million young men and women fill our colleges and universities to capacity. Now we provide a much wider activity range, which includes vocational and avocational, curricular and extra-curricular, elective and required activities and subjects.

We seek to discover the individual interests and attitudes and the development of the whole child,—body, mind and soul. We want socialized human beings who can take their places in society and contribute to the common good of mankind both physically and spiritually. This extended program of education is a responsibility that will tax all the resources of the home, school and community and every constructive social course in the community.

Many schools today give special treatment to the maladjusted child. Visiting teachers follow him into the home to find the disturbing elements in his home environment, and the school assumes responsibility for the child's social development even to the extent of adjusting the home conditions and dealing with unwholesome elements in the community, utilizing whatever character-building forces it may command. And well it may; for the failures of the school and community become the problems of penology, and every social force must be mobilized to reduce these failures to a minimum.

## Environment and Education

With this vivid picture of the slums of New York and the stories of Tyler, Fleet, Parnell, and Palm Streets fresh in our minds, we are more than ever convinced of the profound effect of environment on conduct. These sordid conditions are conclusive evidence that a complete system of education must apply all resources at hand to influence character development and social conduct. It will include the entire process of education both formal and informal, curricular and extra-curricular, within the school and without the school, for we give more consideration today to the child's social attitudes, his emotions and conduct than to the required information and skills of the academic courses.

## Life's Situations

In our training of social conduct, life's situations are more essential than the accumulation of information. Life's situations give opportunity for social activity. Habits of conduct are not formed in a vacuum. The life situation calls for caution. The individual acts and the group reacts. The effect of these group responsibilities makes him feel responsible for his own acts, and society holds him responsible for his own acts. The complete socialization of the individual is not so much a program as it is an outcome of the whole life experience resulting from the impact of every social influence, good or bad. Such conditions point to the wisdom of using all available resources to make the free-time activities of youth constructive and worthwhile; with the increased leisure time for both children and adults there comes an added significance to their leisure-time program in school and out of school. If we can so contrive that the sum total of all our recreational pursuits as individuals, and those of society as a whole, will result in spiritual growth, the gain to our civilization will be inestimable.

On the other hand, if our diversions are dissipations and our pleasures are vices, there is no possible escape. Our Civilization will go the way of ancient Greece, which could not survive the

ravages of dissipated pleasure among its free citizens, who were sustained in their idleness by the labor of slaves.

### School and Community

There are some things to remember. The school shall not be obliged to fill up the whole of the child's wakeful hours with constructive activities. Probably the school can render a greater service by promoting valuable community pursuits. School relations with the various social agencies in the community have a much wider application than the use of school property by the people of the neighborhood. The school administration recognizes the many factors that influence the development of growing personalities which involve not only the administration of good school system but also the creation of a school and community environment conducive to the development of socialized attitudes and good character.

The Rotary Club of New York has taken the first step. It faces reality. It has laid bare the facts, in all their ugliness. *We* have not ignored our sore spots, we have exposed them. From among all the social agencies for social upgrading, this survey lays stress upon the role of the school. Maintaining the perspective suggested by the foregoing paragraphs, the next step is to give meaning, significance, practicality, and drive, to one all-pervasive social institution that can be effective in healing the sore.

Again, we must remember not to be frightened by bogie words like "collectivist" and "socialized." Only a little over a hundred years ago school teaching was a matter of private venture. So were medicine and the law. Teaching, ministry, and law were three great professions for which higher education was especially designed as a preparation. For the schools, the whole picture has changed. For the other professions it is changing. While we should not be frightened by "socialization," we should be frightened by "bureaucracy," which is socialization approaching rigor mortis. No mere expansion of a dead school system anywhere could breathe the breath of life into it. More money, more buildings, more teachers, more subjects do not in them-



selves make better schools or better children. The objectives for which these are used, the skill, the care, the conscience, with which they are applied, are what count. So, again, we need not be frightened by the suggestion that the budget may have to be doubled, but rather by the possibility that it may only buy twice as much of what we already have.

### School and Society

Individuals, as business men, as parents, as lovers of children, as humanitarian citizens of the world, must demand, day in and day out that the schools do what they are supposed to do, that they produce men and women keenly aware of and competent for the world in which they are living. They must demand as an end product, vocational, social, and civic competency. They must demand that children be nurtured in the ideals of American democracy by teachers imbued with American democracy, that is to say, teachers who are intelligent, free, enthusiastic, and professionally competent. They must demand that children be trained for a world that really exists and not for one that never was and never could be. They must demand that these children be taught according to their interests, aptitudes and capacities, in the knowledge that while they are equally endowed at birth, they are entitled to equal opportunities to develop whatever endowments they do have. In other words, they must demand more than a blind instrumentalism. They must demand a far-sighted and deep-sighted, albeit practical idealism.

Semi-public organizations such as Rotary Clubs, should not presume to dictate technical procedures to schoolmen whose business it is to know what these are. However, once a professional staff, conforming to the foregoing specifications is chosen, then the public should insist on certain criteria. Among these are the following:

1. *The school must not isolate itself from the life of the people but must establish effective liaison with all agencies that contribute to the welfare of the student body.* These will be social agencies, other governmental agencies, organizations of employers, organizations of employees, civic organizations, hospi-

tals, clinics, in fact, all the non-school institutions that are an effective part of the education and social scheme. And these institutions should do a full time job without avoidance of the more difficult tasks in the field of greatest need.

2. *Pupils must be programmed within the school on the basis of their interests and aptitudes.* These must be scientifically determined on the basis of the previous record of activities, interviews, tests, visits to the home, and through any other practical means.

3. *Pupils must be continuously re-programmed as interests change, new aptitudes or abilities appear, new opportunities arise, economic conditions change.* There must be no rigid term-by-term assignments, irrevocable except at long intervals.

4. *Pupils must be trained for vocational competency, and when so trained they must be placed in remunerative, respectable, congenial jobs.* Provision must be made for placement of all pupils, both graduate and non-graduate. Placement opportunities or lack of opportunity should always be used as an index of the school's efficiency and society's receptivity. It is at this point that Rotarians find immediate opportunity for service. They can indicate the kind of product needed in the work-a-day world, they can help the schools to obtain that product, and they can, and should, employ it when it is ready to go to work. Those whom they do not employ they will pay for just the same, through the nose, that is, in the form of some kind of tax. And those who do not work are a moral as well as a financial burden upon us all.

There are two important means of implementing the drive for vocational competency. Obviously, the first is whole-hearted support of a program of vocational education. While employers and people in general have been crying for competent, skilled workers, they have, on the whole, been reluctant to relinquish their preference for traditional academic, college-preparatory education, even for the large majority of children who will never go to college and (what is much more important) never actually learn what is supposedly taught. And vocational competency is not one of the things that is taught. As noted above, a sound secondary school program is based upon considerations of in-

dividual ability and current social and economic conditions. Which leads to the second means of implementation.

A valid vocational education is predicated upon a curriculum that reflects current occupational trends. These can be known and understood only through consultation with employers and workers in the various fields. The New York State education law mandates the organization of an advisory board on industrial education in every community where there is a vocational school. In New York City there is an efficient, functioning board of this kind, with a sub-commission for each of the principal trades. Here is an excellent opportunity for business and professional men to use their expert knowledge of business in the interest of boys and girls and for the public good.

5. *As has been pointed out, there are numerous public and private agencies concerned with education and public welfare.* The school should not assume their burdens nor preempt their prerogatives. However, the school should, because of its major interest in the child, see that the services of these agencies are brought to bear upon each individual child, and only when outside action is lacking, should it make direct provision. For instance, clothes, food, shelter, and all that these connote, are the *sine qua non* of civic and vocational efficiency. It is expected that as schools and employers and workers more nearly meet the other obligations suggested in these paragraphs, such welfare provisions will become less and less necessary, but it must ever be remembered that no amount of guidance, teaching, or training can be of any avail so long as the basic physical needs are not met through adequate income on the part of the parent or the child. And, of course, business itself cannot thrive on poverty-stricken non-consumers.

6. *Again, unless other agencies do so, the school must provide for the health of the child.* Clothes, food and shelter are fundamental to health, but they do not guarantee it. Medical and dental service is necessary.

7. *The school must provide adequate and scientific testing programs.* Every means must be used to learn the pupil as well as to teach him.

8. *The school must provide continuous sponsorship for each*

*pupil.* The maladjusted pupil is an old story. No matter how much has been done for him by a multitude of agencies, he often remains maladjusted because nobody in the school system takes a continuous interest in him. The "advisor" or "sponsor," who remains *in loco parentis* throughout the full school life of the individual, is an approach to the answer. It is an example of the way in which a *little* more money can be used to produce enormous returns. The foregoing services must be expanded to some extent, but no matter how much they are expanded, there is no guarantee that they will be used effectively unless there is somebody *continuously interested* enough to bring those services to bear upon each individual boy and girl. Corollary to this is the provision that every teacher must be interested in human beings as well as in the teaching of subject matter or, worse, in holding down a job. Teachers must be civil servants—public servants in the best sense of the word. When they become bureaucrats and job holders, the children die educationally, and society becomes very sick.

9. *The school must provide for research.* It must be directed on one hand toward the discovery of the characteristics of its pupils, and on the other, toward the continued revelation of occupational and social conditions. It is important that this research grow out of real life conditions and that it not grow into the lives of the researchers. It must be as realistic as that of the business man who plans a sales campaign, as scientific as the pursuit of the cosmic ray, as human as the prayer on a mother's lips.

10. *The school must follow up its product.* It cannot throw off its responsibility the moment it hands out pieces of paper to its graduates. It is at this point that necessity for the adjustment of school to society and of society to the needs and desires of the individual becomes apparent, often painfully so. As a unit in the public service it must keep a finger on the pulse of the industrial organism, and when it becomes sick, report to those other public servants who are responsible for economic health, and then keep on reporting, more and more insistently until something is done about it.

11. *In connection with these general criteria, there are many*

*of a technical nature which it is the business of the schoolman to formulate.* But it is the duty of the community to hold him to strict account for results. He must not hide behind supposed technical difficulties or smoke screens of pedagogical language. His profession is not one of the ancient mysteries. Individual instruction is individual instruction. Individual advancement is individual advancement. A live curriculum is a live curriculum. An interested, human, sympathetic, intelligent teacher is easily distinguishable from a driving routineer. A hard-boiled administrator cannot masquerade for long as an educator.

These recommendations for the schools are not vague generalizations, conceived in a spirit of philosophic idealism and expressed by a dreamer. Here and there in the United States they have developed into reality in practical and difficult situations. Retarded by lack of community understanding and of professional training, they have slowly developed into accepted educational practice. In the area surveyed the Metropolitan Vocational High School is operating along these lines. Through the assignment of counselors to the various functions of the program, and through the integration of these functions with good vocational and general educational practices, the problem is being met. At best it is baffling, but the approach seems to be correct.

Recent educational literature includes many practical programs. Such organizations as the National Vocational Guidance Association, the Department of Secondary School Principals of the National Educational Association and the National Occupational Conference have produced abundant material to implement the recommendations in this chapter. No community, no Board of Education, no civic group need be at a loss to know where and how to begin. Local applications will differ and methods will continue to be modified in the light of social changes, but the pattern will always be clear.

### Play

The play period properly describes the portion of the day spent by the child beyond any sphere of supervision. Where

playgrounds or neighborhood clubs are available, this time in proportion to the whole is reduced, and any reduction is of value, as while it is not tenable that children should be subjected to constant regimentation, it is a simple fact that they employ such time generally less intelligently and more dangerously.

Given the choice of running loose in the streets or attending a supervised play area which has really been made attractive, the overwhelming choice of the normal boy is for supervision—not onerous supervision to be sure, nor supervision consciously, from choice,—but there is no urge for untrammelled freedom *per se*.

In this unsupervised play period it might as well be accepted that boys will play in the gutters, under pushcarts, and on roofs, and that their play will be relatively pointless and unproductive, if not actually unwholesome. The corrective is obviously to provide an alternative so desirable and so readily available as to compete for the normal boy's patronage successfully.

### Work to Do

Thus we contrive that the interlocking corrective phases cyclically contribute to one another. The economic correctives abet the physical, and both the cultural; the effects of each and all react upon the adult and the child not only individually, but reflect and rebound in the relationship between the two. It is factual, for instance, that however limited the cultural requirements or capacity of the adult, the expansion of those qualities in the more receptive child must in some degree reflect itself upon the parents. The problem of getting this machinery to function is that common to any mechanical movement—inertia. Once under way, the interlocking phase contribution must furnish a progressive momentum. We have here the suggestion of a fundamental interrelated program, the basics of which are, fragmentarily, in operation and have, where effected, demonstrated their efficacy. The correlation of these basic correctives, their extension and expansion to a really effective extent represent a monumental work. That society can employ its resources to any better end, however, is beyond debate.

This Survey was made by Rotarians to orient their civic ac-

tivities, and it appears that there is work for individuals and organizations to do. It is simpler and perhaps more immediately satisfying to contribute a generous sum to some single private welfare activity. It is much more baffling to bring influence to bear upon whole systems of schools, but even here it must be remembered that there are really only a few large systems, that most of them are small and that local influences are constantly being brought to bear, for better or for worse, upon them. In the largest of them, as the author has pointed out, there is much hope. In New York City teachers are selected strictly upon merit. They are paid the highest salaries in the country. The administration is sympathetic to experimentation. The research staff has just been considerably enlarged. Vocational education, vocational guidance, progressive methods, are beginning to come into their own. The health of the children has received a great deal of attention. There are good deeds as well as good intentions, and yet—there are the slums of New York. There are the stories of Tyler and Fleet and Parnell and Palm Streets, the real names of which and the real tragedies are as well known to slum workers as is the real name of Middletown to the country at large. These stories tell us that no matter how good the schools are, they are not good enough, that no matter how good we American business and professional men and women think we are, we are not good enough. They tell us that in and out of depression there are people who suffer and idle and waste their lives and provide that touch of black that inevitably makes our whole outlook gray.

So we see why we need not be frightened only by the failure of collectivism and socialization, to do what they are expected to do and by our failure to demand that they do it. Collectivist and socialized boards of education are usually composed of business and professional men like Rotarians, indeed often of Rotarians themselves. Therefore, it is patent that Rotarians can readily talk to them, or to themselves, and ask whether the schools are dedicated to such a program as the foregoing, and to demand, if not, why not? Of course, the wise board of education and the wise superintendent of schools will not only be anxious to adopt the program but will put the Rotarians to

work, with their brains, their hands, and inevitably, with their money. Which is as it should be. Those who are leaders in business and in the professions, when they turn leadership in the direction of the mass of the people for service above self, will learn much about the people and the people will learn much about them, to their mutual advantage. For the existence of both is dependent upon the well-being of both. And when the slums of New York and the slums of Middletown disappear (who knows? it may happen even during our own lives) then will the American dream come true.

FRANKLIN J. KELLER, *Chairman*,  
LEON C. FAULKNER,  
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## A NOTE ON THE METHODS OF RESEARCH

THE study on which this volume was based consisted of a series of case investigations into 779 families living in four social blocks in Manhattan Borough of New York City.<sup>1</sup> The study was based on social rather than census blocks, because the social process functions primarily in "face-to-face" relationships. The people who live on the same street have much more in common than those who live on a census block, back to back, facing on different streets. A neighbor is one living in the same house, an adjacent house, or one across the street. The social world of the child includes the street between the two facing rows of houses; on the next street he is a stranger and sometimes an interloper.

The social block is thus the smallest unit of the community; it is the community in microcosm. The social process may be studied here in detail, and elements that might be lost in an extensive study are here to be found in clear focus.

The study is primarily quantitative and statistical in its basic data. Behind every generalized statement lies a mass of factual statements drawn from the schedules and analyzed into groups of responses. No attempt has been made, however, to use refined statistical methods of analysis since the numbers of cases involved are too small for their application. Therefore, the author has been satisfied to state trends in simple percentage terms.

The study has had the additional solidity gained by multiple observation. It consists of a series of family investigations, during 1926, and again during 1931-32. During the first inquiry, conducted by Miss Delphine Dunker, who formulated the scope of the study, 423 families were studied, in four separate blocks.

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<sup>1</sup> A social block consists of two sides of a street, facing each other, from corner to corner. It is to be distinguished from the census block, which consists of two rows of houses, back to back, facing on different streets.

During 1931-32, 356 families in the same blocks were studied under the direction of the author of this volume. The recurrence of many social phenomena after a five to six year lapse, served to determine which were the basic, persistent factors in the social process, and which were those most subject to change.

One great value of the resurvey was that it served to differentiate blocks of stable populations from those of great population mobility. Social processes arising from population mobility, that might have escaped analysis in a single study, were emphasized in the changed picture that was discovered in the mobile block after five years had elapsed.

The study has the distinction of covering a complete phase of the economic cycle. Begun in 1926, in the height of "prosperity," when the prospects of the average American seemed limitless, as reported by enthusiastic realtors and speculators, it was completed in 1931-32, nearly at the depth of the depression, when misery was still a private concern, alleviated only by inadequate private charity. This coverage of a complete economic cycle served to determine the effect both of prosperity and depression upon the families of the slums.

The study deals not with selected families, but with an unselected cross-section of slum families. These families were not selected as being either the more aggressive, or the least capable. They represent a cross-section, from capable, successful families at one extreme to sick, defective, indigent families at the other extreme. The only selection involved limitation to those families having living children of male sex, between the ages of two and twenty-one years. This is a marked limitation in that it excludes from the study a consideration of those families having only girls, or no children. It gives a picture of the social process as viewed from the standpoint of families having only boys or boys and girls.

A further limitation of the study is that it gives only incidental consideration to the sex factor in the social process. No attempt was made to study the girls in the families in the survey, either as individuals, or in their social relationships with the boys in these blocks. Where mention of girls is made, it is because cer-

tan specific situations brought them strongly into the foreground.

The reader may wish to visualize the size of the population covered in this study. It would be equivalent to a house to house study of the population in a fair sized town. Over 4,200 persons were studied during the two survey years, 2,298 in 1936 and 1,945 in 1931-32. Included in this number were over fifteen hundred boys, who were given individual case study, 834 in 1926 and 702 in 1931-32.

The author has sought to veil in anonymity the blocks concerned in this study and asks that the precautions in this direction be respected. The families who shared in this study accepted in good faith the statement of the investigators that the inquiries were confidential. They were almost unbelievably forthright and frank in many of their statements to the investigators. As a precaution, therefore, all names used in the case reports are either fictitious, or are represented merely by fictitious initials. The street names are wholly fictitious, and were chosen because they were at the time of writing, not to be found in the street directories of New York City. The general neighborhood is in each instance identified, so that the reader who is familiar with the environs of New York may visualize the general type of block concerned in each block study.

The investigations, wherever possible, were conducted by investigators of the same race or nationality as the families themselves. Among the investigators were a North Italian social worker, an American nurse with social service experience in Rome, a Porto Rican nurse, and several Negroes, with varied backgrounds.

The inquiry consisted in the gathering of a concise case history from each of a pre-determined number of families in each block. The entire block was not surveyed in every instance. Where the block was considered too large, a random sampling of approximately one-third of the families having boys within the prescribed age limits was followed up.

Information was gathered from these families on three schedules. Schedule 1 consisted of data descriptive of family com-

position and economic and cultural status. It included the following items:—

(a) Identification data; street, house number, floor, apartment number, period of residence on block, family name; (b) data on parental backgrounds, recorded separately for each parent; name and age, birthplace, nationality, date entering the United States, color, religion, usual home language, other languages spoken at home, languages read, literacy status, status with reference to the family (i.e., living, deceased, separated, divorced, away, at home, true or step-parent), nature of employer's business, normal occupation, regularity, normal working hours, normal income, temporary occupation, temporary income, period engaged in work, unemployment and period thereof, organization affiliations.

With reference to the family dwelling, the following facts were obtained:—

The number of rooms exclusive of bath, rental, type of heating, character of plumbing, location of toilet and bath, number of families using toilet, type of lighting; presence of telephone, radio, phonograph and piano; approximate number of books seen and their character.

The family was described in terms of the number exclusive of lodgers and boarders; and the number, ages, and sex of children. In addition to these quantitative items, each family was interviewed relative to its economic problems, its problems of child-rearing, social interests and attitudes toward the home block.

Each parent was asked to discuss the present advantages and disadvantages of the home neighborhood, his expectations with respect to neighborhood change, and his observations of recent changes.

Schedule II, consisting of factual data for each boy over the age of two, and under twenty-one, was filled out either by interview with individual boys, as in the cases of older children, or by interview with the parents, in cases of younger children. This schedule contained the name, age, birthplace and present whereabouts of the child, date of interview; the present school status or the school status last achieved, the extent of present and past

religious education; regularity of church attendance, the name of school and church, present and past cultural education in music, languages, or other subjects; future educational, religious, and cultural plans; employment, date began, weekly earnings, trade training received, character of present occupation, nature of employer's business, present hours of employment, manner of securing employment; if employed only part time, the character of the work, name of employer, weekly earnings, hours of employment. Character of recreation, indoors and outdoors; for outdoor recreation, whether in parks or playgrounds, on wharves, piers, roofs, streets, backyards, or other places; for commercial recreation, whether at cafes, poolrooms, vaudeville houses, burlesque theatres, bowling alleys, prize fights, movies, legitimate theatres, or opera; at adult supervised recreation centers, as clubs, settlements, parish houses, etc., specific institutions being named; membership in self-organized club groups, being specified by name; participation in summer camp programs, either the past or previous summers; country visits or day outings, auspices being named; summer swimming and bathing, the beach or other location being named.

Character of parental control, over hours and over spare time activities; court, probation, and institutional records; health records, most recent physical examination, by whom conducted; extent of medical care, by whom given, nature of physical illnesses; dental care, by whom given, present needs; surgery required, ailment being specified; gross physical status of the child, with special emphasis on sensory defects and deformities, and apparent mental status.

Wherever possible, each child was interviewed relative to his likes, dislikes and play interests, and in each instance the parent was asked to give a statement relative to the behavior of the child with emphasis on his positive and negative traits.

Schedule III, conducted in 1931, consisted of an analysis of the school records of individual boys. On this schedule were indicated the first and last names of the child, and the parents' names; address and birth date of the child, age at entry, present age, present grade, number of terms retarded; designation of the present class as rapid advance, average, slow, ungraded, oppor-

tunity, special, etc., indicating the number of terms retarded or accelerated; mental status wherever obtainable, as indicated by the M.A., C.A., and I.Q.; the name of the test used and the date of examination; the health status as indicated by school medical examinations, giving the dates, the defects found, and the nature of the treatment. Proficiency in studies as indicated by the number of A's, B's, C's, D's and E's on school report cards and an indication of trend in terms of constancy or change in the school ratings; the conduct of the child in terms of school report card ratings, ranging from A to E, and a measure of trend of ratings in terms of constancy or fluctuation.

A statement of special problems and an indication of the social agencies to which the child was known for child guidance treatment; the attendance in terms of the number of days present and absent during the second term of 1930, and a generalization as to the degree of attendance, whether regular or irregular. Participation in extra-curricular school activities, as teams, clubs, musical organizations, etc.; school recommendations for the child's future and the plans of children and of parents, as indicated to school authorities.

### Housing

The housing status of the families surveyed was studied both from a field survey of the buildings they occupied and from an examination of the records of these buildings in the offices of the Tenement House Department of the City of New York. Especial attention was paid to the number and nature of violations of Tenement House laws reported by inspectors. The following items were obtained from official records on a housing schedule: Street name, front or rear house, fire-proofing, size of ventilation shafts, number of stories in height, basement or cellar, number of apartments, number in basement or cellar, number on each separate floor, type of business or manufacturing conducted, number, type and dates of violations reported by inspectors and action of the Department thereon.

The following items on the housing schedule were checked by field inspection: Cleanliness and illumination of halls; access to

roof by skylight, bulkhead or scuttle; type of fire escape, whether balcony, connecting ladders, vertical ladder, inclined ladder, or stairway; total number of water-closets, total number of apartments, ratio of water-closets to apartments, number of water-closets in halls, number of these locked and unlocked, number of water-closets in apartments, number in yards or courts, physical condition of unlocked water-closets in halls, yards or courts.

The use of each schedule was explained to field workers by a series of typed instructions which defined each term in the schedule, and which described the procedure for handling non-typical instances. This set of instructions, while of interest to the technical reader, has been omitted because of their unimportance to the non-technical reader.

### Auxiliary Sources of Data

Other data were obtained from municipal departments, private agencies, and individuals. From visiting teachers of the Board of Education were obtained significant facts relative to problem children living on the blocks, from the Police Department were obtained records of complaints and of arrests for specified years on these blocks, from the dockets of the Magistrates' Courts were obtained records of arraignment of persons from these blocks for specified years, and from the Children's Courts were obtained arraignments for delinquency.

From private social agencies, such as the Committee of Fourteen, were obtained data on the extent of prostitution in these blocks, while from settlement houses, such as Hamilton House and the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association were obtained data descriptive of individuals and play groups. From the Bowling Green Neighborhood Association were obtained data from valuable family health records, and from case records of families presenting social problems.

From realtors, old residents, and club workers were obtained data relative to the history and present status of individual blocks. Field observations of general block conditions and pushcart market activity were conducted by special investigators while studies of street play were conducted by students from the Sociology division of the College of the City of New York.





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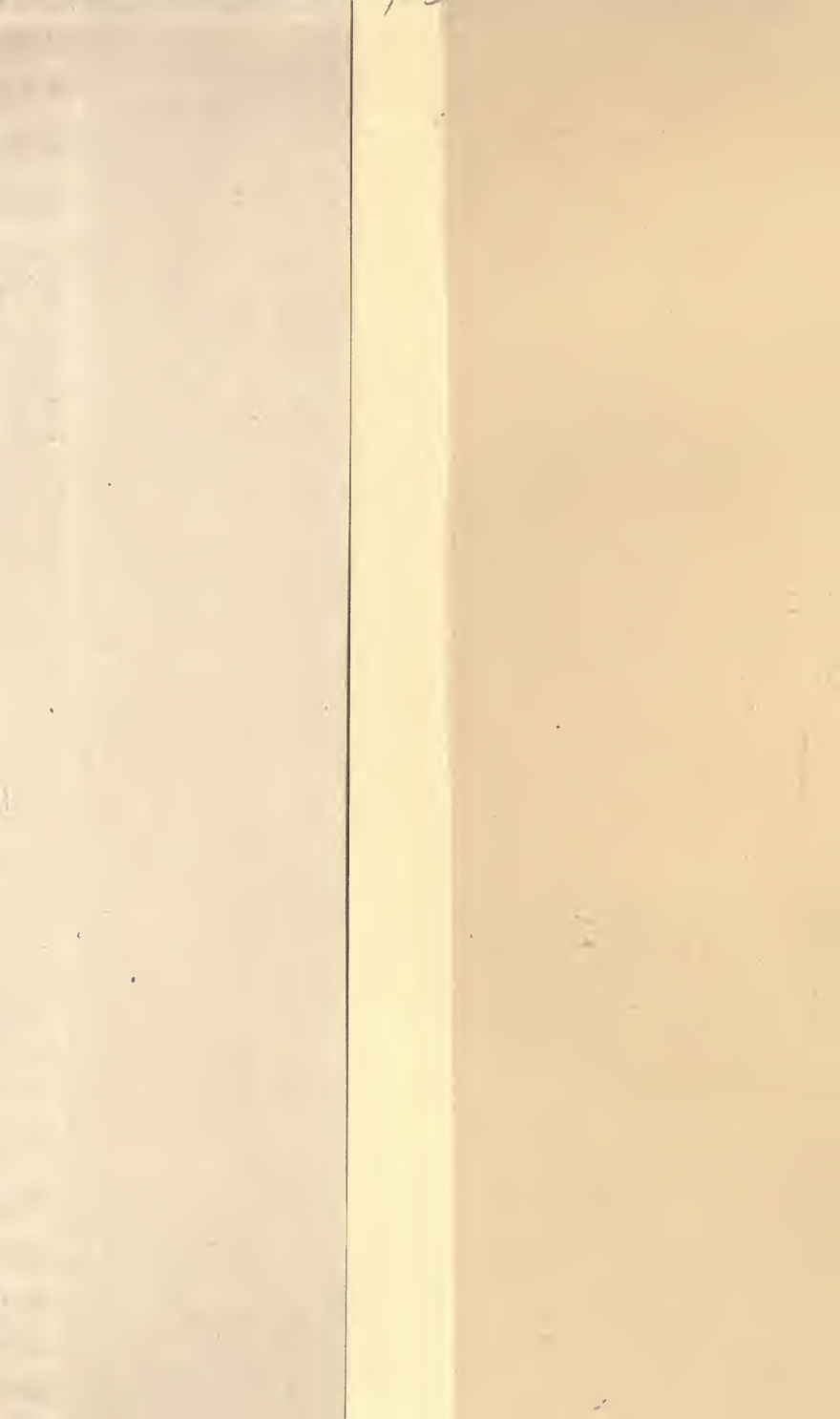












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